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IN THE SECOND CENTURY

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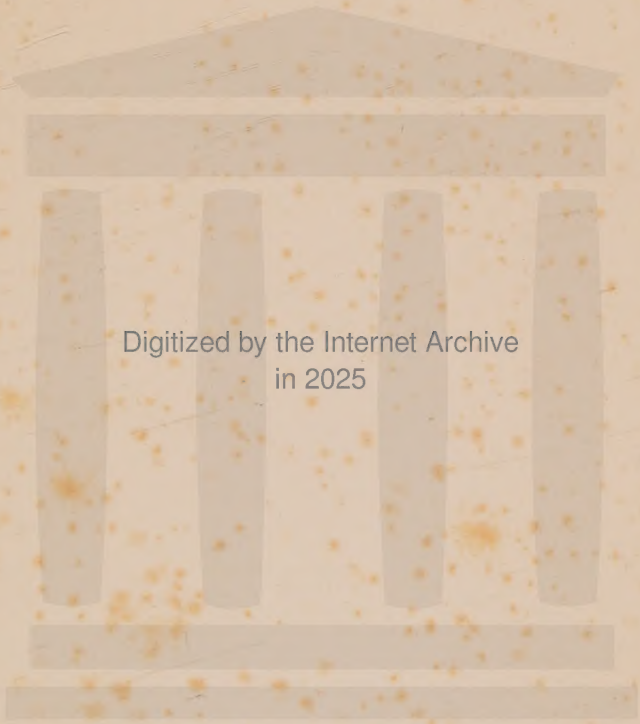

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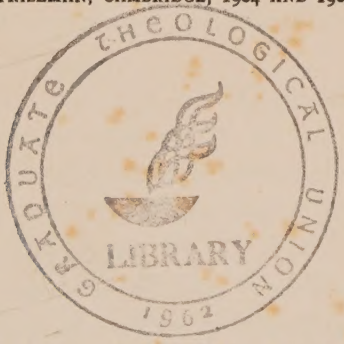
STOIC AND CHRISTIAN IN THE SECOND CENTURY

A COMPARISON OF THE ETHICAL TEACHING OF MARCUS AURELIUS WITH THAT OF CONTEMPORARY AND ANTECEDENT CHRISTIANITY

BY

LEONARD ALSTON, M.A.

SOMETIME SCHOLAR OF TRINITY COLLEGE, MELBOURNE
BURNEY PRIZEMAN, CAMBRIDGE, 1904 AND 1905



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PREFACE

My principal indebtedness in the writing of this brief essay (originally intended for the Burney Prize) is to Professor Harnack's *Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, vol. i., and to Professor Dobschütz's *Christian Life in the Primitive Church*. The references in the text are to the pages of the English translations published by Messrs. Williams and Norgate.

For the life and aims of Marcus Aurelius and for a general statement of the ethical system in which the emperor was trained, the general reader can scarcely do better than refer to the Introduction to Dr. G. H. Rendall's admirable translation of the "Meditations" (*Marcus Aurelius Antoninus to Himself*). This is the only satisfactory English version of Marcus Aurelius that I know; and when consulted for single paragraphs it seems in almost

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all cases to stand above criticism. It fails, of course, as all translations must, to catch the characteristic manner of the Stoic writer; and so, if read continuously, it produces, by its almost too perfect literary finish, an effect very different from that left by the phrases of the lonely thinker who scratched down, rather than wrote out, the ideas that governed his life. This, however, is hypercriticism, and my only serious regret is that the excellent qualities of Dr. Rendall's work did not come under my notice earlier; in which case I should have made much more use both of Introduction and Translation.

This book makes no attempt to deal comprehensively with the authors touched upon, but is intended to illustrate merely those aspects of their teaching which to my individual judgment seem to be of the most abiding significance. Questions of metaphysic and theology which have no direct bearing on the problems of the conduct of life have been intentionally subordinated throughout.

Some very brief notes concerning each of the authors dealt with are added in an appendix.

In compiling these I have made free use of such authorities as Krüger's *Early Christian Literature*, and Cruttwell's *Literary History of Early Christianity*.

It will be noticed that only writings belonging to the formative period of Christianity are mentioned—writings prior, that is, to the works of Irenæus and Clement of Alexandria.

CHRIST'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,
March 1906

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STOIC AND CHRISTIAN

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY—THE ENVIRONMENT—DIFFICULTIES OF THE PROBLEM

To the superficial eye the world of the second century was a singularly complete, well-ordered world—a world which had forgotten the jarring discord caused by the antagonism of rival races, rival polities and warring parties. Yielding to the mighty force of Roman imperialism the barbarian of former times had transformed himself into a comparatively docile subject of the princeps, or was sternly restrained by lines of invincible legions from crossing the barriers which separated the Roman world from the chaos beyond. Civilisation was triumphant as it had never been triumphant before. Material comfort was

widely spread. Travel, within the limits of the empire, was easy for the moderately rich, and other aids to culture were many. All the treasures of philosophy, the best fruit of the best minds of earlier days, were to be had with but little effort. For everywhere the philosophic teacher or preacher was to be found eagerly plying his trade and offering his wares. There was an opportunity, as never before, we might imagine, for the leisurely comparison of culture with culture, religion with religion, national custom with national custom. The patient seeker after truth had little need of guess-work in inquiring into alien habits of thought. Controversy under the tolerant *régime* of the masters of the world was unrestrained as perhaps it has never been since; little need being felt, in a commonwealth so broadly based on common consent, on general utility, and on invincible military strength, to guard the established order against disturbing currents of thought. With complete peace, unlimited material for comparative study, freedom of controversy, convenience for travel to distant centres of culture—what

more could the truth-seeker ask in order to be able to achieve his aim? It would seem a world singularly fitted for men of scholarly tastes; as in fact it succeeded in winning the praise and the envy of scholars from the days of Pliny the Younger, to those of Gibbon.

But such an estimate would be almost wholly superficial. No wise traditions of philosophical or historical insight and of the ultimate criteria of truth had survived the revolutionary changes wrought by the Roman legions. No sane system of moral and intellectual training for the young had been evolved to suit the conditions of the more sheltered life of cosmopolitan citizenship. Brought up under the charge of vicious and ignorant slaves, from whose society the citizens of the Empire passed to the superficial schools where little save cheap rhetoric and the formalities of grammar were taught, they came to man's estate for the most part morally and intellectually stunted.

The material conditions of life made for outward peace and prosperity. Yet, was ever

man as a moral being less contented with himself ? The practical realisation of a partial ideal showed him only too clearly how incomplete that ideal was. What availed military triumphs over barbaric foes and scientific triumphs over material discomforts when man himself remained essentially the same ? Instead of being the richer for his mighty achievements he found himself only the poorer—robbed of the earlier incentive to satisfying activities, robbed of the recurrent satisfaction of finding himself ever winning nearer some comprehensible attainable goal. No longer had he an adequate motive to fling himself into the whirlpool of political and international strife, and by flinging himself away to find self-realisation and self-satisfaction in self-sacrifice on behalf of his city and its traditions, its temples and its gods. Once the path of duty was clear. There was always something here and now to be performed—a Persian Armada to be forced back from the shores of Hellas, a Tyrant City to be compelled to relinquish her hold over a cluster of fair cities and islands, a Carthage to be destroyed, a Plebeian

deluge to be dammed back, a would-be Sulla to be cut down in the market-place. Now there were no duties save negative ones and passive ones. All the world should have been as a garden, and men felt it as a prison. They had been citizens, and now they were subjects. War had been an acknowledged evil, but peace had come to be an evil scarcely less. Under the shelter of the Pax Romana had come into being a moral chaos unknown before.

The old ideas of what was honourable and lovely and of good report could not be adapted quickly to the enlarged sphere of duties. To co-operate with one's fellow citizens in saving the State had been an obvious duty, too obvious to require discussion. But now that every man was fellow citizen to every other, the appeal to patriotism lost its force and sounded hollow. There was no longer satisfactory fuel with which to feed the sacred fire. To bow the knee beside one's fellow citizens before one's country's gods, to bring due offerings to their temples and to share in their holy festivals had been duties clear and simple. But who now were the gods to whom deference was due,

now that Orontes had poured his flood-waters into the Tiber ?—Isis and Osiris, Mithra and the rest, or the deified Emperor with perhaps his deified spouse ?

The loss of spontaneity in virtuous activity was accompanied by a sense of alienation from the spiritual powers. The restrictions imposed from without on the better energies of humanity helped to evoke that consciousness of sin, almost unfelt before, which now became one of the chief points to which philosophy, grown religious, henceforth applied itself, seeking to assuage the ills it could not cure.

Outward unification had not simplified life but complicated it. And all men were astray, as sheep seeking their shepherds ; and false shepherds were many. From the monarch on the throne to the clerk in the crowded streets, all were victims of an intellectual restlessness, and few did not find themselves a prey to moral anarchy. The world was diseased and the moralist recognised the fact. In place of the clear ringing confident appeals addressed to healthy minds by the poet or the historian, philosophy must substitute a patient

study of moral pathology.[1] Instead of calling vigorous athletes into the welcoming arena, she feels pulses and prescribes diets. The spontaneity has gone from the noblest characters. Where a previous generation, if it acted rightly, acted from habit based on a simple ethic that had become almost an instinct, the new generation must first persuade itself that right *is* right before it can determine to follow right, in scorn of consequence.

In this unhealthy world the two chief forces making for righteousness were undoubtedly the conservative teaching of the Stoics, and the aggressively reforming spirit of the Christian moralists. The former addressed itself more particularly to those who still so far shared in the vigour of humanity's youth, as to believe that the natural man is the reasonable, moral man. The latter were

[1] *Cf.* Dill, *Nero to Aurelius*, pp. 406–7. "Philosophy to Plutarch, Apollonius, or M. Aurelius, had a very different meaning from what it bore to the great thinkers of Ionia and Magna Graecia. Not only had it deserted the field of metaphysical speculation, it had lost interest even in the mere theory of morals. It had become the art rather than the science of life."

more in touch with those great classes that were growing more and more painfully conscious of the alienation of humanity from God, and the need of redemption and atonement. In their work of leavening the world with higher ideals, the two, no doubt, co-operated. Yet the sense of mutual hostility was in most cases stronger than the sense of a common aim, and Christianity spent much of its early energy in combating the philosophies of the day. On the other hand, Marcus Aurelius' contemptuous indifference towards Christianity challenges attention, even more than the ignorant hostility to other ethical schemes shown by the majority[1] of early Christian writers. Christianity has not yet forced itself on the attention of the leaders of philosophic thought, though it is soon to do so, and Christian ethics and classical philosophy will mingle to form a common stream.

Marcus Aurelius is perhaps the latest of first-class thinkers to whom Christianity is only a vague name. Ignorant, however, as

[1] Justin is a marked exception ; and in a less degree, Athenagoras and Aristides.

he is of the distinctively new features of the new religion, he represents, in more ways than one, a transitional movement of thought. He has travelled far from the Cynic and earlier Stoic conception of man as a self-sufficing unit, without quite attaining the Christian ideal which declares that he can only find his higher self in and through the development of the higher self in others. He goes far towards substituting for the Stoic gospel of pride, the Christian gospel of humility, and is readier to acknowledge shortcomings than we expect the Stoic sage to be. Thus the thought of Marcus Aurelius is transitional, and, as such, is naturally full of minor inconsistencies. The old and the new are not fully reconciled; and this later Stoicism, unlike the Stoicism of Epictetus, presents no rounded symmetry of development, such as would make interpretation and elucidation a matter calling rather for simple industry than imaginative insight. The tentativeness that marks most of his teaching must be borne in mind throughout.[1]

[1] Of certain central ideas, forming the core of his ethical system, this is not the case. The thoughts

In this period, also, which closes with the death of Marcus Aurelius, Christianity is slowly forming itself as an ordered system of thought, out of which Catholicism is to develop in the process of time.[1] For these various reasons no better author or period could be chosen for the institution of a comparison of the best of non-Christian systems with the Christian. A little later, and the most vehemently hostile of anti-Christian writers is permeated with Christian ideals, and the apostate Julian can only confront a secularised Christianity with an artificial Christianised paganism. Our task is to weigh against one another the last important Stoic who is not yet aware of the presence of the new religious force, and the Christian teachers contemporary

summarised at the end of chap. iv. of this essay are to him incontrovertible dogmas; and the different parts of his argument concerning them are so interwoven (each being the explanation and the corollary of the others) that it is difficult to subdivide the subject and impossible to hold the subdivisions apart.

[1] "More than ever I believe that the period of origins, the embryogeny of Christianity, if one may so express it, ends about the death of M. Aurelius in 180." (Preface to Renan's *Marcus Aurelius*.)

with and antecedent to him—Christians living in a non-Christian world which, as yet, shows little sign of succumbing to their influence.

Herein, then, lies the justification of our task, and perhaps its chief interest. But the comparison of one school of writers or thinkers with another school is a task fraught with special difficulties. The hasty and the superficial investigator find it so often convenient to slur over individual traits in broad statements. Generalisation is always deceptively easy. The wide propositions first arrived at may simplify to such an extent the further progress of our thought, that some strength of will may be required in order to insist that we shall not bracket together for all purposes, names which have been conveniently bracketed, and appropriately bracketed, for some special purpose. The more we know of the individual the less we feel that generic formulae satisfactorily characterise him. At first he came to us clearly and concisely labelled—of such and such a century and nationality, a follower of this philosophy or of that—a French Scholastic of the fourteenth century, a Neoplatonist

of the third. We look a little closer and find points of difference that distinguish him, to careful eyes, from the other members of his school. Gradually he grows under our searching study into an Individual, resisting obstinately all our attempts at classification—not quite this, not altogether that—a puzzling, annoying freak, upsetting our earlier and simpler judgments.

But not only must we guard against this blunder of losing the Individual in the General, there are occasions when we must beware of an opposite fault, that of ascribing too much to the Individual, too little to the class to which he belongs.

Turning over the pages of the Epistle of Clement, or of an argument of Justin's, ignorant of their place in the current of history, their antecedents, and their intellectual environment, we might, not unnaturally, ascribe to them far more than is rightly theirs. How much of their teaching is really their own? How much original, not necessarily in the sense of being first enunciated there and then, but even in the sense of being so thoroughly

grasped that the preacher has made his precepts part of himself? Is he dealing in thoughts that are common property, mistily realised by himself, or at least not seen in all their bearings, and not yet become an organic part of his own life and thought? Or does he give us gold that has been delved for by the sweat of his own brow, regardless of the fact that similar ore has been already brought to the surface by others? Is he a voice, in short (whether crying in the wilderness or raised in harmony with a choir of other voices, it matters little), or merely an echo?[1]

[1] When, for instance, we meet in S. Clement's Epistle such a collocation as διὰ πίστιν καὶ φιλοξενίαν, we may, perhaps, with Lightfoot (*Apostolic Fathers*, I. i. 397) neglect it as insignificant on the ground that other passages such as §22 ταῦτα πάντα βεβαιοῖ ἡ ἐν Χριστῷ πίστις with its context, or again §31 δικαιοσύνην καὶ ἀλήθειαν διὰ πίστεως "show that practically he has caught the spirit of the Pauline teaching, whatever may be the defect in the dogmatic statement." But it is equally arguable that the former unguarded statement must be taken as the more characteristic of Clement's indefinite doctrinal position, while the others merely echo the familiar language of S. Paul. The curious collocation would suggest, though not with overwhelming force, that he is more at home with the words than master of the ideas of the apostles.

Both Marcus Aurelius and the Christian Fathers shine largely by reflected light. Perhaps none of them would have any wish to claim an originality which might savour of undisciplined waywardness. Rather would they repudiate the personal in order to be the better spokesman of what they conceive to be impersonal universal Truth. Yet each has unmistakable characteristics of his own, a personal bias of some kind, and above all a special purpose[1] underlying his task of authorship. The task of disentangling, in each case, what is individual from what belongs to the school would be one of no ordinary difficulty; but only to a very limited degree is it necessary for our purposes to attempt it. It will be sufficient to set over against one another the two contrasted systems of thought, looking rather to their logical consequences than to

[1] Thus Clement has a special reason for dwelling on hospitality in his Epistle to the Corinthians, even as Polycarp, in his letter to the Philippians, for his emphatic reprobation of covetousness. It is not to be inferred that such pointedly mentioned virtues and vices would have equal prominence in a systematic course of moral instruction.

their historical antecedents, and not especially concerning ourselves with the formation of an estimate of the moral greatness of the authors themselves. For though it is scarcely possible to understand thoroughly the ethics of Marcus Aurelius without some preliminary study of Stoic metaphysic, it is quite possible to compare the composite product, once clearly comprehended, with contemporary Christian thought; and this we may do, weighing together the two systems in a spirit of criticism far removed from unqualified laudation, though without ceasing to honour the earnestness and sincerity both of the one school and of the other.

We have to set side by side the writings of one who, finding himself astray in a naughty world, composed his sermons, for lack of better readers, *εἰς ἑαυτόν*, for himself alone; the exhortations addressed by the leaders of a society to those who looked to them for leadership; and the vindications of the teachings of that society addressed to a hostile and contemptuous world outside.

The Stoic philosophy is full of unconscious inconsistencies and discrepancies. The reader

expects them, is ever on the look-out for them, as he follows the quaint arguments of its earlier expounders. But, at least, the others wrote in order to convince. Marcus Aurelius, writing *To Himself*, would scarcely be perturbed by yet wider inconsistencies. His thought is nearly always tentative. He is ready to reject and amend. At times it seems sufficient to him to indicate his meaning by a few incomplete symbolic phrases, meaningless to prying eyes that do not possess the secret of the author's inner thought; but not meaningless, doubtless, to the hermit mind that jotted them down as signposts, indicative of something, but of something too intimate for elaboration.[1]

Over against this diarist are to be set the preachers who could afford to omit long passages in their reasoning, knowing that their

[1] The *Meditations* are, perhaps, about as representative of average Stoicism as the commonplace book of an earnest church-goer to-day would be of contemporary Christianity. To the student of a later century the very inconsistencies which we should expect to find in the latter, as we find them in the former, would be not the least valuable of its contents, as indicating the trend of conflicting currents of thought.

hearers, as well as themselves, took many arguments for granted; and also the apologists, whose natural impulse it was (writing for the Gentile and writing to convince) to adopt, perhaps, a diplomatic moderation that they scarcely felt, in order to minimise the differences between Christian Theology and the philosophic doctrines of the day. Not one of them, diarist, preacher or apologist, is aiming at composing a possession for all time; and herein lies much of our difficulty.

In Marcus we have an earnest teacher bent only on correcting defects in his own teaching of himself; in the Apostolic Fathers, teachers whose aim was to supplement the vaguer knowledge of men who were fundamentally at one with themselves; in the Apologists, teachers who, if they failed to make alien dogmas attractive to the world at large, failed entirely in their purpose.

In this respect, however, they are all at one. The aim of each is practical, related to the world that exists here and now. Each has his cosmological system, explanatory of the universe and its relation to God and man.

But yet they are none of them mere builders of cloud-capped philosophic palaces, neglectful of the pressing duties of the hour. To the extent that their works deal with speculative questions and with philosophic theory rather than practice, they are rather interpreters of some accepted scheme than constructers of new schemes pointing the way to untraversed fields of thought.

Accordingly, in discussing the ethical value of all these writings, while we recognise that the philosophic scheme which each accepts from his predecessors, counts for much both in his applied ethics and in his life, we must not forget that personal characteristics, immediate difficulties or temptations, and special opponents, count for much likewise.

Both our moral nature and our ethical theories largely form themselves in response to the forces with which they are brought into antagonism. The preacher, the poet, the prophet, all attack those evils in themselves and in their surroundings, of whose strength they become conscious in the necessity of battling with them. The emphasis that is

placed on one side rather than another of ethical teaching, is generally evidence of a felt need of the particular time and circumstance of the teacher. It is in the East, for example, that one observes the fiercest longings for temporal power, for sensual gratifications, for wealth and the display of wealth. The Eastern mind is more quickly attracted than the Western by the external glitter of these things, in spite of all its pseudo-reverence for the higher. The Eastern character is more easily overwhelmed by the passing temptations and solicitations of material advantages. Yet it is the great religions of Asia that have taught with most constant reiteration the wisdom of ignoring the material circumstances of life, and finding salvation in a contemplation of spiritual things, that ignores almost entirely the temporal and the physical, and in its forgetfulness of the external world may come even to see in absolute abnegation of individuality, the crowning achievement of a perfected life.

So, no doubt, it is to the ubiquity of the morbid vices of the decadent period of Græco-Roman paganism that is due the continued

harping, in the early Fathers, upon sins of the flesh.

Similarly, it is the strong self-controlled Socrates who, basing all virtue on knowledge of right and wrong, drops self-control out of his scheme of life; the very need of such a quality being hidden from the nature that has not consciously won it.

So, in the case of one who writes his own manual of ethics for his own use alone, we may expect to find indications of character and circumstance in what is omitted no less than in what is inserted. There are in the *Meditations* few references, for example, to envy, jealousy, covetousness, and the grosser sins. No doubt the earnest Stoic would in no walk of life have found much need to dwell on the former failings; but as emperor he sees little, among goods that are accidental and external, that he can covet as belonging to others and desired by himself. Had he taken in hand the compilation of a treatise to be read by numerous disciples, such references could hardly have been completely omitted. Their absence is partly an indication of temperament, partly

a consequence of his purpose in writing, partly a result of his imperial position.

In like manner, when we find in such authors as these some failing continually reprobated, we have some grounds for inferring that the writer is combating an impulse of which he was conscious as an evil in his own character. It is the man who feels the strongest native bias towards aggressive arrogance who speaks most frequently of the virtue of humility; an Ignatius—with his self-assertive manner of thought clad in a distinctive diction (itself a sign of a self-assertive mind); conscious of the great part that he is playing on the stage of nascent Christendom; eagerly directing his epistles to one church and another; forcing his personality and his peculiar views on the attention of each; with his strong conviction that the welfare of the church depends upon the holders of his own episcopal office—who repeats again and again that his hearers are more firmly established than himself, and that his one hope is to become worthy to be called merely a disciple.[1]

[1] See Eph. 12. ἐγὼ ὑπὸ κίνδυνον, ὑμεῖς ἐστηριγμένοι. Rom. 9. ἐγὼ δὲ αἰσχύνομαι ἐξ αὐτῶν λέγεσθαι. Eph. 1.

Even so, in the case of Marcus Aurelius, I do not find in his continual dwelling on the shortness of life and the probable extinction of the soul at death, any inborn indifference to immortality or natural feebleness of "the will to live." Rather his reiterated arguments and assertions suggest an instinctive desire for immortality, in the secondary form of fame as well as in that of surviving personality; a desire which is, indeed, controlled by the conclusions he draws from his reasoned theory of the universe, but is only completely over-borne in brief moments of moral disgust with the men around him, in whom the desire for spiritual growth is almost non-existent. His desire to escape from such companions temporarily becomes all-powerful;[1]

ἵνα δυνηθῶ μαθητὴς εἶναι. Rom. 4 and 5. *νῦν ἄρχομαι μαθητὴς εἶναι.*

[1] "Pass to the characters of those who live with thee, the most attractive of whom it is difficult to tolerate, not to speak of tolerating one's self. . . . On the contrary, one must comfort himself while awaiting the natural dissolution and not rebel at the delay"—*μετὰ τοῦτο ἔπιθι ἐπὶ τὰ τῶν συμβιούντων ἤθη, ὧν μόλις ἐστὶ καὶ τοῦ χαριεστάτου ἀνασχέσθαι, ἵνα μὴ λέγω, ὅτι καὶ ἑαυτόν τις μόγις ὑπομένει . . . τοὐναντίον γὰρ δεῖ παραμυθούμενον ἑαυτὸν*

but his normal attitude is not so easy of definition.[1]

These and similar considerations must be taken into account throughout our reading. To submit every phrase mechanically to microscopic scrutiny while ignoring the elusive personal factor, would, especially in the case of the imperial Stoic, be grossly unfair. We do not hold our friends guilty or guiltless on the strength of chance phrases in conversation or correspondence. We have sufficient insight to know that the odd, unusual, unexpected thought is likely to issue in speech almost sooner than any other, simply because it is odd, unusual and unexpected. Chance

περιμένειν τὴν φυσικὴν λύσ ν, καὶ μὴ ἀσχάλειν τῇ διατριβῇ. V. 10.

1 To some extent also his pessimistic absence of reforming passion must be the result of his experience of the little that even the master of the Roman world can effect, however earnestly he may strive. And if we grant that his became at last a temperament in which "the will to live" was finally quenched by philosophic reasoning, we may, perhaps, ascribe this result too, at least in part, to a despair, born of much knowledge, of the possibility of reforming man by improving the external circumstances of his life.

expressions should, of course, be noted; for there will be occasions when the unexpected phrase will arrest our attention longer than the general tenour of an argument; the unusual word coming to us as an indication of a suppressed undercurrent of individual thought, an undercurrent which represents the real character of the speaker or writer, which for the moment has come to the surface, as it were, against his will. But inconsistencies of reasoning are always to be expected in works composed, not for the library, but for the encouragement of those who are taking part in the battle of life. We shall steer clear of the folly of treating the *Meditations* of Marcus in the spirit of a German professor handling the mysteries of Hamlet; and while scrutinising carefully every sentence that we have under our hands, shall not be too eager to build lofty edifices on doubtful foundations.

CHAPTER II

SOME GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS — THE ARGUMENT FROM DESIGN—OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM

In examining the moralists even more than the metaphysicians of alien schools the critic is liable to read into them much that is familiar to himself, but would be unfamiliar to them. We transfer from our own field of thought what we imagine must be common to all schools, because it is to us fundamental and indeed axiomatic; while we overlook or misread much which we have not been prepared to find. Each of us has his eye trained for the perception of only certain restricted classes of moral facts. Finding, in an author whom we have been brought to honour, the particular injunctions and ethical principles which at that particular stage of our personal

development have come to seem (and probably are, for us) the things most needful for our further growth, we wrench them from their context, or at least over-emphasise them, allowing other arguments, which to the author were of infinitely more consequence, to remain unnoticed in the background. These latter elements we were unable then to assimilate, though to the prophet himself they alone formed the substance of his message. Our ears were not fitted to hear them, nor our eyes to see. The personal bias distorted our judgment.

Now every philosophic moralist has his own scheme by which he endeavours to account for himself and his doings, but each alike praises actions which to all men seem obviously good, and condemns those that are equally clearly bad. The "practical" man, when he finds that Stoic, Epicurean and Christian alike extol fortitude, self-restraint and justice, and alike condemn greed, cowardice and cruelty, is inclined to sweep aside further discussion as vain and purposeless. So when a popular moralist like Dean Farrar or Matthew Arnold

endeavours to draw from the Stoic writers arguments and illustrations for moral lessons which he is desirous of enunciating for the benefit of a particular public, everything in Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus or Seneca which is neither precisely Christian nor precisely opposed to Christian doctrine makes apparently no impression on him, and is therefore passed by; and though for his special purpose, no doubt, there is little loss, yet the Stoic teaching is thrown out of focus, misdrawn and misinterpreted, merely in order that a moral which could equally well have found illustration elsewhere may receive the support of honoured names.

But yet the "practical" man will, quite as much as the dogmatic philosopher, be possessed of invincible likings and dislikings for this or that man, though the fruits of their character as shown in overt action—

"Things done, that took the eye and had their price;
O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice."

—do not lend themselves immediately to

convenient appraisement as much better or worse in one case than in another. May it not be the way in which each of us has answered, to whatever extent implicitly and unconsciously, those fundamental questions as to the basis of ethics which only metaphysicians care actually to discuss, that gives to each that subtle indefinable individuality of character which makes one of us honour James and despise Paul, and another reverence John and shrink from James? And in the same manner our sub-conscious metaphysical bias so gives colour and tone to our most trifling actions that we win and lose the approval of others in ways that though they may greatly mystify us are seldom accidental?

It need not be that there is some pronounced intermixture of admitted evil in our action. It need not be because

> "Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement.
> He who smites the rock and spreads the water,
> Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath him,
> Even he, the minute makes immortal,
> Proves, perchance, but mortal in the minute,
> Desecrates, belike, the deed in doing. . . .

Thus achievement lacks a gracious somewhat ;
O'er-importuned brows becloud the mandate,
Carelessness or consciousness—the gesture."

There are other more subtly elusive qualities about each individual's words and acts which almost equally becloud for one or another of those about him their purity and attractiveness. It is not a little thing to differ—not necessarily in argument, for argument often brings up, not what is characteristic of us, but something merely accidental, some belief which we only believe to be ours—but to differ at bottom on such questions as to whether Man's character or his actions are the ultimately important things ; whether I live in order to do certain things which my Creator wishes done, or in order to become such a being as He wishes me to be. Holding either view, I am likely to perform much the same specific duties, but I shall perform them with a difference. The "practical" result of different ethical systems remains much the same, but the aroma of the man's act—

"All that the coarse World's thumb
And finger failed to plumb"—

may be entirely different, according as he says "I am of the Porch," "I am of Paul, or Apollos." Some larger intelligence than ours might indeed be able so to combine the various statements of the moral ideal as to show that they are but different aspects of the same aim, partial glimpses, as it were, of something never yet seen in its entirety. But none the less they mark us off one from another, and mutually alienate the most earnest thinkers and workers.

Of course if we are resolutely bent upon finding an underlying unity in the works of those whom we set about comparing, we shall have little difficulty in finding it—if, that is, we are ready to overlook subtle shades of difference in expression or emphasis which we cannot measure without effort, and so "value in a trice." If we are content to handle our authors as Professor Dill in his recent work [1] has dealt with Seneca and his contemporaries—translating the rhetoric of the schools into the rich phrases of the New Testament, slurring over all characteristic differences—we shall

[1] *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius.*

find no insuperable task in blurring together the precepts of Stoic and Christian. But none the less the effect thus produced is more misleading than helpful. It is easy to set out a list of parallel passages wherein the same thought is expressed by a New Testament writer and by M. Aurelius, but expressed with a difference. It is easy to show the parallelism. Yet it would be a dull mind indeed, that would not feel the contrasts and realise their significance acutely, however impossible it might be for even the careful reader to state in general terms wherein their importance lies. It is in accounting for these subtle nuances which we cannot ignore, that much of the difficulty of comparison lies.

There are two remarkably contrasted types of mind with which we are all familiar. On the one hand, there is the man who, as he becomes aware of the presence of regularity and symmetry in one department of Nature after another, begins, as by instinct, to assume that there can be no God. The systematic orderliness of the sequence of phenomena require for him no assumption of an ordering

mind to explain them. The sequences explain themselves; a God is unnecessary; to believe in one is childish and absurd. On the other hand, there is the opposite type of mind, which leaps equally instinctively from the perception of order to the belief in an ordering mind. Of the two, the former is obsessed by the idea of *capriciousness* which he associates with all manifestations of Will, and wishes to exclude from the Cosmos as a whole the possibility of the action of any similar Will. The latter finds a natural correlation between orderliness and Reason or Design, and can only picture a Godless world as a chaos, and an atheist as a man whose disorderly thoughts form a moral chaos.

Men of the one type are possibly those who are most subject to caprice in themselves, and most affected by the capriciousness of others around them—disorderly minds in a disorderly social environment, but possessing an appreciative eye for the uniformities of the physical world. The others are perhaps of a more naturally strong moral tendency, but see the physical uniformities less distinctly. To

the former irregularity rather than regularity suggests motived action; to the latter, irregularity is a sign of lack of motive or at least of weakness of purpose. To the one class the word "Law" calls up the idea of uniformity unaffected by caprice; to the other, orderliness imposed by Reason. The latter feel that the world of experience floats, as it were, in an ocean of mind which is alone, or chiefly, real. Those of the other class think of mind as intervening from without in the activities of an opposed and alien element.

It would not be easy to find a mind more firmly convinced than Marcus Aurelius', of the essential orderliness of the world, and the necessity of connecting that orderliness with the existence of Design. He affects, once or twice (ix. 39; iv. 3; x. 6)[1] to put the contrary possibility; but even if the world is to be considered a fortuitous concourse of atoms, we find him inferring that still it will be able to produce nothing injurious to itself.

[1] *Cf.* iv. 27. ἤτοι κόσμος διατεταγμένος, ἢ κυκεών, συμπεφορημένος μὲν, ἀλλὰ κόσμος. ἢ ἐν σοὶ μέν τις κόσμος ὑφίστασθαι δύναται, ἐν δὲ τῷ πάντι ἀκοσμία.

In short, Marcus Aurelius cannot clearly picture to himself a world in which there is no guiding Providence. The presence of Design is assumed in all his statements,[1] though not connected normally with any distinct conception of the existence of a personal God. It is rather the personified Whole of things of which he thinks as acting in such a way as to make this the best of all possible worlds—because it cannot clearly be pictured as acting otherwise.

Yet the "Providence" of Marcus Aurelius has no reference to any one far-off divine event[2] to which all things are moving. Things are designed for mutual co-operation, like hands

[1] *εἰ γὰρ δίκαιον ἦν, ἦν ἂν καὶ δυνατόν, καὶ εἰ κατὰ φύσιν, ἤνεγκεν ἂν αὐτὸ ἡ φύσις.* xii. 5. *Cf.* xii. 10; xii. 21.

[2] Though in vi. 42, we find a passage in which a final purpose appears to be assumed (*πάντες εἰς ἓν ἀποτέλεσμα συνεργοῦμεν*), and in vi. 43, we get the similar phrase, *συνεργὰ πρὸς ταὐτόν*; yet we see the true significance of these when we compare them with other passages, such as vii. 13 (*πρὸς μίαν τινὰ συνεργίαν κατεσκευασμένα*), which show that it is the reciprocity and the co-operation which are intended to be emphasised. (Note in this connection the frequent compounds of *συν-* and *ὁμο-*, *e.g.*, *πάντα πάντων τῶν γινομένων συναίτια.* iv. 40. *Cf.* iv. 45; v. 1; v. 8.)

and feet, to help one another, not for the accomplishment of anything final or permanent. The Cosmos is continually imaged as a stream, the constituents of which are of little account, while the termination of it in the sea is scarcely dwelt on. Change and perpetual Rejuvenation[1] are the essential characteristics of the world thus conceived — a world in which all things work together for their mutual good, though nothing permanent remains — not even the world itself. Each subserves the perfect working of the Whole, yet none especially is to benefit except as members of the Whole.[2]

In a very different way the Christian authors with whom we deal feel the presence of Reason permeating the Universe. There is practically no appeal to miracle, beyond that

[1] *πάντα, ὅσα ὁρᾷς, ὅσον οὔπω μεταβαλεῖ ἡ τὰ ὅλα διοικοῦσα φύσις, καὶ ἄλλα ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας αὐτῶν ποιήσει, καὶ πάλιν ἄλλα, ἐκ τῆς ἐκείνων οὐσίας, ἵνα ἀεὶ νεαρὸς ᾖ ὁ κόσμος.* vii. 25. *Cf.* xii. 23 ; viii. 50 ; iv. 36.

[2] viii. 19. *ἕκαστον πρός τι γέγονεν, ἵππος, ἄμπελος· τί θαυμάζεις ; καὶ ὁ Ἥλιος ἐρεῖ· πρὸς τί ἔργον γέγονα, καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ θεοί. Σὺ οὖν πρὸς τί ; τὸ ἥδεσθαι ; ἴδε, εἰ ἀνέχεται ἡ ἔννοια.* Thus, even the gods have a purpose (*ἔργον*) which cannot be enjoyment.

of the Resurrection (and even that is assumed not to be an isolated event; the probability of its non-isolatedness being indeed the common proof of the immortality of the soul);[1] while there is frequent reference to the orderliness of the material world (*cf.* especially Clement's Epistle xx. *et seq.*; Theoph. i. 5). They assume, however, a much greater amount of specially providential action,[2] their emphasis being placed upon the Love and the *Will* of God (leading to frequent loving intervention), while Marcus Aurelius feels rather the absolutely trustworthy unchanging reasonableness of the universe; the guiding central force in the one case being thought of as a Personal Will, in the other as Impersonal Reason.

Either assumption leads on to Optimism. Among the Christians, of course, Hope is set beside Faith and Love as one of the triad of

[1] *Cf.* Clem. xxiv. "Let us understand, dearly beloved, how the Master continually showeth us the resurrection that shall be hereafter. . . . The night falleth asleep and the day ariseth; the day departeth and night cometh on. . . . The sower goeth forth. . . ." &c. (Lightfoot's translation.)

[2] Barn. 19. *εἰδὼς ὅτι ἄνευ Θεοῦ οὐδὲν γίνεται.*

graces.[1] The Christian Hope has essentially a social reference. It is hope for all mankind under the loving care of God. Its importance lies in its stimulating power as a driving force enabling each to do his part in the salvation of the world. The word "faith" itself might often in Justin Martyr and Athenagoras be replaced by the phrases "divine force," or "spiritual energy," and Hope is placed beside it as an incentive making this energy reasonable and effectual; while Love is that which directs the activity of Faith, and gives body to Hope.[2] Thus Optimism is a *duty*[3] for the Christian, as well as a logical result from his creed. With it go cheerfulness and joy—elements making an exalted life possible. Hermas, for instance, directs the tenth of his commandments against sadness (λύπη),

[1] Polyc. iii. δυνηθήσεσθε οἰκοδομεῖσθαι εἰς τὴν δοθεῖσαν ὑμῖν πίστιν, ἥτις ἐστὶν μήτηρ πάντων ἡμῶν, ἐπακολουθούσης τῆς ἐλπίδος, προαγούσης τῆς ἀγάπης τῆς εἰς Θεὸν καὶ Χριστὸν καὶ εἰς τὸν πλησίον. . . .

[2] It is not intended to imply that any of the authors is consistent in his use of such conceptions and terms.

[3] *Cf.* Ign. Magn. vii. μία προσευχή, μία δέησις, εἷς νοῦς, μία ἐλπίς, ἐν ἀγάπῃ, ἐν τῇ χαρᾷ τῇ ἀμώμῳ. . . .

which is described as sister to discontent and double-mindedness.[1] It is "more wicked than all the spirits and most terrible to the servants of God, and more than all spirits destroys man and crushes out the Holy Spirit."[2] The prayer that is mixed with sadness "does not ascend pure to the altar of God."[3]

Marcus Aurelius is sometimes cited as a typical pessimist. And in certain directions he certainly is a pessimist of the pessimists. But none the less truly, in those spheres of thought and action which to him are of supreme importance, he is an optimist of the optimists.

It is hardly the case that he would assent unreservedly to any of the four propositions of modern philosophic optimism—that the good in the world outweighs the evil; that all evil is subservient to good throughout the universe; that evil in the world will finally

[1] ἀδελφή ἐστι τῆς διψυχίας καὶ τῆς ὀξυχολίας. (Mand. x.)

[2] πάντων τῶν πνευμάτων πονηροτέρα ἐστὶ καὶ δεινοτάτη τοῖς δούλοις τοῦ Θεοῦ. (*Ibid.*)

[3] μεμιγμένη οὖν ἡ λύπη μετὰ τῆς ἐντεύξεως οὐκ ἀφίησι τὴν ἔντευξιν ἀναβῆναι καθαρὰν ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον τοῦ Θεοῦ. (*Ibid.*)

be vanquished and overcome by good ; or that evil is a mere illusion, and good the only reality.[1] As a general rule, he comes nearest to holding the last proposition of the four. But though he looks upon physical evils as illusions subject to the control of " Opinion," he has no such feeling with regard to moral evil, which, with reference to himself at least (when, that is, it is looked at subjectively), is evil absolute and without qualification. He would probably have felt (had the alternative of assenting or dissenting been set before him) that they were all four misleading propositions, because of a certain implied confusion, or at least connection, between the ideas of happiness and moral good. He would neither assent nor deny, feeling that all four statements lay outside the purview of the philosophy which alone should occupy the attention of the man who would live in a manner worthy of his nature.

Marcus Aurelius never stops to ask whether virtue is " worth while " in the sense in which

[1] This fourfold enunciation of the possible implications of optimism is taken from an article by Mr. A. C. Pigou in the *Independent Review*, May 1905.

the average man always finds himself asking the question. Rather he takes for granted that nothing else *can* be worth while; and at the same time tends to leave aside the question of the inter-relation of moral good and evil on the one hand, with happiness and unhappiness on the other, as being, for him, irrelevant. And it is merely as a side issue of the same question that the problem of personal immortality comes before him, to be swept aside, with something like impatience, as irrelevant likewise.

He does not ask (as has been stated above) whether virtue, in the ordinary use of that phrase, is "worth while"—that is, whether it brings a balance of happiness over pain or no. He assumes that it is, apart from all consequences, unquestionably worth while, *at least for himself*. And looking at life from this self-centred standpoint he holds that all non-moral evil is subservient to moral good; but moral evil is emphatically not in his eyes illusory for *his own personal career* or subservient to any higher good; while he has no clear hope of entirely surmounting evil in his own life-

experience. He may thus be called, in a rather special sense, an optimist; his optimism affecting chiefly the relation of the universe of experience to his own perfection-seeking soul.

Where he is utterly a pessimist is in accepting, as inevitable and unconquerable, the stolid indifference of the mass of mankind in the presence of virtue. They seek other things, and he will not condemn them; for what seems to him morally evil in their career may not be really evil—it may be mere seeming. He has no conception of the possible moralisation of the rest of mankind, no vision of their spiritual regeneration.

It is herein that his "optimism" (if the expression will pass) stands in the most marked contrast to the optimism of Christianity. Marcus does not look for any amelioration in social conditions, or in the character of the mass of mankind. The Fathers accept their social environment—cæsarism, slavery, gradation of classes—with equal equanimity, though the twofold conception, of the Kingdom of Heaven, and the approaching end of the

world modifies somewhat their attitude towards it. But while Marcus almost ridicules[1] the idea of the good man being able to set his immoral neighbour in the right way, Christianity finds in this the very centre of its purpose, the justification of its being. Moral progress in the world as a whole is the life and hope of the one. Its very possibility is denied in round terms[2] by the other. Marcus has devoted himself too much to quasi-scientific observation of moral facts; and experience, uninformed by religious insight, is in this always on the side of pessimism. The naturalistic moralist asks with wearisome reiteration, "How can the leopard change his spots?" The Christian enthusiast defies experience,

[1] xii. 16; v. 28. *εὖ σοι γένοιτο! τοιγαροῦν καὶ σὺ λόγον ἔχεις· . . . δεῖξον, ὑπόμνησον.*

[2] *οὐδὲν νεώτερον ὄψονται οἱ μεθ' ἡμᾶς, οὐδὲ περιττότερον εἶδον οἱ πρὸ ἡμῶν. . . .* xi. 1. See also vi. 37; vi. 46; vii. 1. *Cf.* Lecky: "While the Epicurean poet painted in magnificent language the perpetual progress of mankind, the Stoic was essentially retrospective, and exhausted his strength in vain efforts to restore the simplicity of a bygone age." (*European Morals*, vol. i. p. 193.) In this particular connection we may bracket the Christian with the Epicurean.

declaring that with God all things are possible. His optimism drives him to attempt the apparently impossible, and in his enthusiastic flinging away of self he sometimes achieves it.

CHAPTER III

MAN AS A "NATURAL," "RATIONAL" AND "SOCIAL" BEING

When, in the *Meditations*, we meet the word "Reason," as applied to men's actions we must avoid the error, natural to the modern reader, of imagining that Marcus Aurelius has usually in view man's intellectual capacity to choose between right and wrong, and rule his actions accordingly. Man has the capacity to defy Nature, to perform actions that are unnatural, to live in ways "not according to Nature." "One fear alone disturbs me—that I myself may do something which the constitution of man does not intend, or in some way it does not intend, or what it does not intend just now." (vii. 20.[1]) Yet it is not that

[1] *ἐμὲ ἓν μόνον περισπᾷ, μή τι αὐτὸς ποιήσω, ὃ ἡ κατασκευὴ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐ θέλει, ἢ ὡς οὐ θέλει, ἢ ὃ νῦν οὐ θέλει.* *Cf.* v. 8, *ad fin.*; vii. 58.

Reason, in Marcus Aurelius' view of the matter, lifts Man above Nature, and sets him in opposition to it. Rather "the rational," "the social," and "the natural," are in their application to man interchangeable; for the capacity to reason, and the tendency to rational co-operation are man's distinguishing characteristics, setting him above the merely animal world. "To the rational being the same act is according to Nature, and according to Reason" (vii. 11.[1]) Man is a child of Nature. "He who stands apart and separates himself from the rational order of the common Nature through displeasure at what befalls him, is an abscess on the universe; for that Nature which has produced thee, produces this also." (iv. 29.[2]) It is by virtue of *unreason* that man opposes nature, not by virtue of reason. By virtue of reason he alone, of living creatures, can willingly obey. "Only to the rational being has it been granted to follow willingly

[1] *τῷ λογικῷ ζῴῳ ἡ αὐτὴ πρᾶξις κατὰ φύσιν ἐστί, καὶ κατὰ λόγον.*

[2] *ἀπόστημα κόσμου, ὁ ἀφιστάμενος καὶ χωρίζων ἑαυτὸν τοῦ τῆς κοινῆς φύσεως λόγου, διὰ τοῦ δυσαρεστεῖν τοῖς συμβαίνουσι· ἐκείνη γὰρ φέρει τοῦτο, ἡ καὶ σὲ ἤνεγκεν.*

with that which happens ; but merely to follow is a necessity for all." (x. 28.[1]) When he thus obeys voluntarily, he is living according to reason and nature ; when he resists ("like a pig that is being sacrificed, and kicks and squeals"[2]) he is not exercising a power that marks him as distinctively above other creatures, though it is a power to act contrary to Nature which the inanimate world does not share.

So possessed is he of the consciousness that herein (namely, in his capacity for renunciation) lies the very best of man's nature, that he points out again and again, as man's chief glory almost, that this capacity for resignation and renunciation can never be thwarted. For if his passing purposes fail through meeting human opposition or natural obstacles, he can find in the opposing forces only new material on which his higher nature may exercise itself and become conscious of itself. "If any one impedes your action by the use of force . . . avail yourself of the hindrance with a view to

[1] *μόνῳ τῷ λογικῷ ζῴῳ δέδοται, τὸ ἑκουσίως ἕπεσθαι τοῖς γινομένοις· τὸ δὲ ἕπεσθαι ψιλὸν, πᾶσιν ἀναγκαῖον.*

[2] *ὅμοιον τῷ θυομένῳ χοιριδίῳ καὶ ἀπολακτίζοντι καὶ κεκραγότι.* x. 28.

some other form of virtue." (vi. 50.[1]) "Intelligence and reason are able to find a path through every obstacle." (x. 33.[2]) "The man becomes both better, if one may say so, and more praiseworthy, by making a right use of these happenings." (x. 33.[3]) "For what else are all these things, except exercises for Reason, which has looked with scientific thoroughness into the facts of life?" (x. 31.[4])

The "reasonableness" of Man's nature has for Marcus a double reference. Towards God—the Will of the Universe, the personified Whole of things—it is reasonable to exercise a becoming submission. Towards his fellow men, the equally important members of this Whole, Man's chief duty is that of beneficence and a willingness to co-operate. The former is a passive, the latter an active duty. Man

[1] *ἐὰν μέντοι βίᾳ τις προσχρώμενος ἐνίστηται . . . συγχρῶ εἰς ἄλλην ἀρετὴν τῇ κωλύσει.*

[2] *νοῦς δὲ καὶ λόγος διὰ πάντος τοῦ ἀντιπίπτοντος οὕτως πορεύεσθαι δύναται, ὡς πέφυκε καὶ ὡς θέλει.*

[3] *ἐνταῦθα δὲ, εἰ δεῖ εἰπεῖν, καὶ κρείττων γίνεται ὁ ἄνθρωπος, καὶ ἐπαινετώτερος, ὀρθῶς χρώμενος τοῖς προσπίπτουσιν.*

[4] *τί γάρ ἐστι πάντα ταῦτα ἄλλο πλὴν γυμνάσματα λόγου ἑωρακότος ἀκριβῶς καὶ φυσιολόγως τὰ ἐν τῷ βίῳ;*

must submissively accept what the Common Nature allots him, and eagerly bestow what benefits he can on his neighbours without thought of receiving again. He must be "contented with acting justly in what he now does, and satisfied with what is assigned to him" (x. 11[1]); even as the good citizen passes an equable life, "proceeding with actions beneficial to his fellow citizens, and cheerfully accepting whatever the city may apportion him." (x. 6.[2]) The two duties are felt to be complements the one of the other, and both to be corollaries intuitively apprehended by one who realises what the nature of Man is, and in what his reasonableness consists.

Now the theology of Marcus Aurelius starts with two, at first sight, almost contradictory assumptions. The world is a reasonable world, a world in which everything is adapted to some purpose; but this world is limited in time and will be re-dissolved into nothingness. The ultimate purpose of all existing beings there-

[1] δύο τούτοις ἀρκούμενος αὐτός, δικαιοπραγεῖν τὸ νῦν πρασσόμενον, καὶ φιλεῖν τὸ νῦν ἀπονεμόμενον ἑαυτῷ.

[2] προϊόντος διὰ πράξεων τοῖς πολίταις λυσιτελῶν, καὶ ὅπερ ἂν ἡ πόλις ἀπονέμῃ, τοῦτο ἀσπαζόμενος.

fore is not to be sought in some end that is ultimate and final from the point of view of a temporal succession of events or of a time-evolved development; but the purpose to which things are adapted must be a contemporary purpose. Accordingly, a reasonable world must be taken to mean a world well constructed with a view to harmonious present activity, not a world of activity directed towards some distant goal in time.[1]

Man, moreover, is a reasonable being, just as the world itself is permeated with reason. Accordingly, whatever is "natural" to man must be reasonable for him. But Marcus Aurelius makes no attempt to find instances of what is natural to man in those tendencies which most men actually exhibit,[2] but only in those activities which he intuitively knows

[1] See p. 34, note 2.

[2] "Look not around on other men's ruling principles, but look straight to this, the goal to which Nature conducts thee, both the Nature of the world, through those things that befall thee, and thine own Nature, through those that must be done by thee." (*μὴ περιβλέπου ἀλλότρια ἡγεμονικά, ἀλλ' ἐκεῖ βλέπε κατ' εὐθύ, ἐπὶ τί σε ἡ φύσις ὁδηγεῖ, ἥ τε τοῦ ὅλου διὰ τῶν συμβαινόντων σοι, καὶ ἡ σὴ διὰ τῶν πρακτέων ὑπὸ σοῦ.*) vii. 55.

to be reasonable, and therefore worthy of him, Apparently the fitness or unfitness of things, persons, or actions for mutual service, is something intuitively evident to the reason that contemplates the relations of these to one another; and only such actions as are instinctively perceived to be socially advantageous are "reasonable," and therefore "natural." Thus his normal tendency is to reverse the proposition just given, and to declare the reasonable to be always natural, and moral evil, however common, to be non-natural.[1]

This proposition becomes of importance in the following connection. Since man is a reasonable being in a reasonable world, and since virtue is not rewarded by pleasure, pleasure and pain must be of secondary importance, and it is for the reasonable man to aim at attaining, not happiness, but that which alone the nature of the reasonable universe insures him the certainty of achieving.[2] It

[1] This word, rather than "illusory," best indicates his normal estimate of the significance of evil.

[2] *Cf.* Sorley's *Ethics of Naturalism*, pp. 207, 208. "If 'adaptation to environment' is consistently made the end, activity will have to be restricted to suiting one's

is not in mortals to command success in external things, but it is theirs to command it in the world of virtuous activity; for here every apparent defeat supplies only new openings for further virtuous action. Pursuit of anything else than virtue is unwise because no other pursuit is confident of achieving its aim. They that hunger and thirst after righteousness will certainly be filled; they that hunger after other possessions have no such assurance.

The inconsistencies involved in Marcus' conception of the Natural and the Reasonable are nowhere more conspicuous than in such passages as v. 3, where he seems to identify his own virtuous bent with the law of Reason, while admitting at the same time that other men's "nature" cannot be expected to find its satisfaction in the same forms of activity as his own. "Judge yourself worthy of every word and act that is according to Nature; and do not let the consequent reproaches or remarks of others divert you, but if it is a right thing

powers to an external order of nature, and desire will have to be curbed when it does not bring the means of satisfaction along with it."

to be done or said, do not think yourself unworthy of it. For those persons have their own ruling principle, and their impulses are their own. Pay no attention to these things but go straight forward, following your own nature, which is also the common[1] nature; and the way of both is one." (v. 3.[2]) This almost hostile contempt for the mass of mankind—curiously at variance (as one is inclined to declare it) with his belief in this as the best of all possible worlds where everything that the philosopher's mind meets is nutritious food for it, where everything is mutually adapted to satisfy the needs of the Whole—

[1] In such uses of the word κοινός it is not the brotherhood of man, apparently, that is before Marcus' mind, so much as membership of the whole material universe. (His attitude is not unlike Walt Whitman's.)

[2] ἄξιον ἑαυτὸν κρῖνε πάντος λόγου καὶ ἔργου τοῦ κατὰ φύσιν· καὶ μή σε παρειπάτω ἡ ἐπακολουθοῦσά τινων μέμψις, ἢ λόγος, ἀλλά, εἰ καλὸν πεπρᾶχθαι ἢ εἰρῆσθαι, μὴ σεαυτὸν ἀπαξίου. ἐκεῖνοι μὲν γὰρ ἴδιον ἡγεμονικὸν ἔχουσι, καὶ ἰδίᾳ ὁρμῇ χρῶνται· ἃ σὺ μὴ περιβλέπου, ἀλλ' εὐθεῖαν πέραινε, ἀκολουθῶν τῇ φύσει τῇ ἰδίᾳ καὶ τῇ κοινῇ· μία δὲ ἀμφοτέρων τούτων [ἡ] ὁδός. v. 3. *Cf.* v. 25. ἄλλος ἁμαρτάνει τι εἰς ἐμέ; ὄψεται· ἰδίαν ἔχει διάθεσιν, ἰδίαν ἐνέργειαν. ἐγὼ νῦν ἔχω, ὅ με θέλει νῦν ἔχειν ἡ κοινὴ φύσις, καὶ πράσσω, ὅ με νῦν πράσσειν θέλει ἡ ἐμὴ φύσις.

is exemplified in many other passages.[1] It is the peculiarly practical direction of his ethical scheme that impels him to take up this inconsistent position. He desires at one and the same time to accept no theory that will weaken his own efforts after righteousness, and to find excuses for the evil actions of others (partly, no doubt, in order to avoid the mental perturbations which would be likely to follow on disappointed expectations as to other men's conduct). He thus wishes to look at quite similar actions both from a subjective and from an objective point of view. For himself there is to be no compromise. For others, when their actions can be looked at objectively, pardon is to be found, at one time in the Socratic paradox that all vice is ignorance or the consequence of ignorance, and no one is ever voluntarily deprived of moral truth;[2]

[1] *E.g.*, *τὸ μὴ ἀξιοῦν ἁμαρτάνειν τοὺς φαύλους μανικόν· ἀδυνάτου γὰρ ἐφίεται.* xi. 18. *φέρονται γὰρ πάντως ὡς ἐπὶ οἰκεῖα καὶ συμφέροντα αὐτοῖς.* vi. 27. *συνεχῶς ἐφιστάναι, τίνες εἰσὶν οὗτοι, ὑφ' ὧν μαρτυρεῖσθαι θέλεις, καὶ τίνα ἡγεμονικὰ ἔχουσιν. οὔτε γὰρ μέμψῃ τοῖς ἀκουσίως πταίουσιν . . . ἐμβλέπων εἰς τὰς πηγὰς τῆς ὑπολήψεως καὶ ὁρμῆς αὐτῶν.* vii. 62. *Cf.* iv. 6, 48, 50; v. 10; vii. 70; viii. 15, 44, 53.

[2] *πᾶσα ψυχή, φησίν, ἄκουσα στέρεται ἀληθειάς.* vii. 63.

at another time in the admission that their nature demands different satisfactions from his own, and that self-satisfaction is a primary law.[1] To Marcus, evidently, not all men are potentially divine.

While to the Christian, man is always to be thought of as man, always as an end in himself, the Stoic can state the contrary view without any consciousness of inconsistency. Thus he gives (v. 20) what is perhaps the culminating expression of subjective empiricism in ethics—a morality seeking its fruition in self-centred satisfaction apart from the necessity of any moral development in others. "In one respect man is the nearest thing to us—in so far as we must do good to them and endure with them. But in so far as any of them stand in the way of our proper actions man becomes to me one among the indifferent things, no less than sun or wind or wild beast. Perhaps some activity is impeded by him? But there is formed no impediment to impulse or disposition, owing to the reservation under which these act, and their capacity for

[1] *πάντι γὰρ συγγνώμη τὸ ἴδιον ἀγαθὸν ζητοῦντι.* xi. 16.

re-adaptation. For the mind adapts and changes every hindrance to activity into that which furthers it; that which opposes action comes to favour it, and the obstacle in our way helps us on our way."[1]

Now the "nature" of man, as Marcus points out again and again, is social; the sphere of his activity is the great commonwealth within which each city is, as it were, a family. (iii. 11.) "The world is a kind of political community" (iv. 3[2]), and man is a political animal. So far the Christian writers are willing to go with the Stoic; but they are not willing to stay at this point. Man (the Christian would argue)[3]

[1] *καθ' ἕτερον μὲν λόγον ἡμῖν ἐστιν οἰκειότατον ἄνθρωπος, καθ' ὅσον εὖ ποιητέον αὐτοὺς καὶ ἀνεκτέον· καθ' ὅσον δὲ ἐνίστανταί τινες εἰς τὰ οἰκεῖα ἔργα, ἔν τι τῶν ἀδιαφόρων μοι γίνεται ὁ ἄνθρωπος, οὐχ ἧσσον ἢ ἥλιος ἢ ἄνεμος ἢ θηρίον. ὑπὸ τούτων δὲ ἐνέργεια μέν τις ἐμποδισθείη ἄν· ὁρμῆς δὲ καὶ διαθέσεως οὐ γίνεται ἐμπόδια, διὰ τὴν ὑπεξαίρεσιν, καὶ τὴν περιτροπήν. περιτρέπει γὰρ καὶ μεθίστησι πᾶν τὸ τῆς ἐνεργείας κώλυμα ἡ διάνοια εἰς τὸ προηγούμενον· καὶ πρὸ ἔργου γίνεται τὸ τοῦ ἔργου τούτου ἐφεκτικόν· καὶ πρὸ ὁδοῦ, τὸ τῆς ὁδοῦ ταύτης ἐνστατικόν.* *Cf.* viii. 56 (quoted pp. 58–59).

[2] *ὁ κόσμος ὡσανεὶ πόλις.*

[3] This passage is intended, of course, to express what is latent in Christianity rather than what was distinctly held by early writers.

being "naturally" social, finds not only the sphere of his activity, the opportunity for development, in his relations to others, but also the supreme reward, the culmination of his development, in similar relations. Thus he looks for the coming of a Kingdom which will be in fact that "dear city of Zeus" which the present world is only potentially. Of that kingdom all men are potentially fit to become members, and the militant Christian seeks to make them all actually fit. He finds his chief incentive to such aggressive activity in the approval of his Master, Christ (whose approval is the approval of already perfect humanity), and in the hope of fellowship with countless perfected souls, saints such as he is to be himself when he has attained his full stature. Marcus Aurelius, lacking the belief in a future life, not able to conceive of the soul as distinct from matter,[1] always conscious of the shortness of life, and despising actual mankind with a contempt which Christians who are aware of man's potentialities cannot

[1] *εἰ διαμένουσιν αἱ ψυχαί, πῶς αὐτὰς ἐξ ἀϊδίου χωρεῖ ὁ ἀήρ*; iv. 21.

feel, can only look inward for approval. The Christian turns outward towards the Christ, forward towards the New Kingdom; and thus finds, by faith in the one direction, by hope in the other, a motive (which is itself almost a reward) such that the Stoic who calls man a "naturally" social being ought to be the first to acclaim as a natural incentive, a natural ambition, a natural recompense.

But this is a conclusion which Marcus never feels impelled to draw. Even to desire harmonious relations with others is to him a mark of weakness to be reprobated.[1] The Christian asserts that we must lose ourselves in self-sacrificing activities in order to find ourselves; but even as our self-sacrifice, if it is not to be worthless fanaticism, must be of a social character, so likewise we must find our reward on the social plane. The attempt to give social service without anticipation of social reward (whether the approval of a personal God or the companionship of equally devoted fellow workers) is itself non-natural, and brings its own non-natural consequences in the

[1] See x. 1 (quoted pp. 66–67).

recurrent pessimism which at times almost slays in Marcus the will to live. Nor will he admit the possibility, clashing as it does with a superficial conception of justice, that self-completion can only be found in and through others.[1] This view of life, which pervades all Christian reasoning—a view implicit in the doctrine of atonement, in the statement that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children, in the duty of evangelising the world —seems to be the most important corollary that it is possible to draw from the belief that we are all members one of another. But Marcus will have none of it. "To my faculty of choosing my own line of conduct my neighbour's faculty is equally indifferent as his spirit and his body.

[1] *Cf.* Biggs' *The Church's Task under the Roman Empire*, Pref. p. xiv. "They [*i.e.*, the Platonists] would not admit that the undeserved voluntary suffering of one could make another better. Plotinus expressly rejects the idea as immoral, though he must have had a mother. It seemed to him inconceivable that it should be the duty of the good man to give up any portion of his spiritual wealth for the relief of the poor, to make himself worse that others might be better. In fact, with him as with the Stoic, the ultimate formula is 'my soul and God.' Whereas with the Christian it is 'my soul, my brother's soul, and God.'"

For, indeed, though we have been formed ever so much for one another's sakes, yet our ruling faculties have each the lordship in its own sphere; otherwise the harmful actions of my neighbour would be of harm to me; which was not what God ordained, lest it should be in another's power that I should miss my proper welfare." (viii. 56.[1])

If analysed far enough, Marcus Aurelius' repeated assertion of the social nature of man comes to little more than the statement that his duties do not begin and end in himself. The world of which he is a member is not vividly realised as a kingdom or commonwealth of equal souls, equally important as ends in themselves. Rather he feels that the whole world, animate and inanimate, is the sphere for the development of his moral nature (or rather for its activity—" development " being an idea

[1] *τῷ ἐμῷ προαιρετικῷ τὸ τοῦ πλησίον προαιρετικὸν ἐπίσης ἀδιάφορόν ἐστιν, ὡς καὶ τὸ πνευμάτιον αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ σαρκίδιον. καὶ γὰρ εἰ ὅτι μάλιστα ἀλλήλων ἕνεκεν γεγόναμεν, ὅμως τὰ ἡγεμονικὰ ἡμῶν ἕκαστον τὴν ἰδίαν κυρίαν ἔχει· ἐπεί τοι ἔμελλεν ἡ τοῦ πλησίον κακία ἐμοῦ κακὸν εἶναι· ὅπερ οὐκ ἔδοξε τῷ θεῷ, ἵνα μὴ ἐπ' ἄλλῳ ᾖτὸ ἐμὲ ἀτυχεῖν.* viii. 56. *Cf.* iv. 39. *ἐν ἀλλοτρίῳ ἡγεμονικῷ κακὸν σὸν οὐχ ὑφίσταται.*

somewhat alien to the Stoic philosophy). There is practically no conception (indeed there is at times a direct denial) of the influence of character on character. I must not wrong others, because he who wrongs another wrongs himself.[1] No one by his evil actions can make another worse.[2] One must not weary of well-doing, because well-doing is doing that which is according to Nature, and therefore beneficial to oneself.[3] But the well-doing, it is evident, belongs to a different plane from the receiving of the benefit. I do good deeds which are not thought of as affecting another's higher self, in order merely to fulfil my own proper functions. It would even be misleading to say, "in order to develop my own higher self"—the moral imperative being of a curiously bare and unqualified character, having little concern with permanent consequences of any kind. Man is conceived (as one feels

[1] ὁ ἁμαρτάνων ἑαυτῷ ἁμαρτάνει· ὁ ἀδικῶν, ἑαυτὸν ἀδικεῖ, κακὸν ἑαυτὸν ποιῶν. IX. 4.

[2] μήτι διοίσει σοι, ἐὰν ὑπὸ ἄλλου γένηται τὰ δίκαια καὶ καλῶς ἔχοντα; οὐ διοίσει. X. 13. οὐ γὰρ τὸ ἡγεμονικόν σοῦ χεῖρον ἐποίησεν ἢ πρόσθεν ἦν. VII. 22.

[3] οὐδεὶς κάμνει ὠφελούμενος. ὠφέλεια δὲ πρᾶξις κατὰ φύσιν. μὴ οὖν κάμνε ὠφελούμενος, ἐν ᾧ ὠφελεῖς. VII. 74.

inclined at times to exclaim impatiently) as a sort of moral machine which can be approved for an extensive production of good works, but is not itself affected by the goodness of the products; while there is nothing else of a permanent character to which the products are subservient. It is all done for the good of the Whole, but the Whole too will pass; and no clear or inspiring suggestion is made as to what constitutes its good. Were it conceived as a commonwealth of human beings, the nobility of whose characters, without regard to their permanence, is declared the sole thing worth considering, we could honour such a conception of the Universe, whether prepared to accept it or not. But the beneficent actions themselves seem to be regarded as the beginning and the end of all social duty, even though Marcus too finds himself compelled to admit, in one of his more analytical moods, that they must be performed on a lower plane than that on which results can be recognised as unreservedly good.[1]

[1] vi. 45. "Let the word 'beneficial' be taken in the more vulgar sense—as referring to things indifferent" (*κοινότερον δὲ νῦν τὸ συμφέρον ἐπὶ τῶν μέσων λαμβανέσθω*).

This view would seem to demand a conception of good as something outside of and superior to time relations. But Marcus Aurelius most strongly objectifies time, emphasising the importance of the present, the nothingness of past and future; laying all the stress of his teaching on the nobility of certain courses of action rather than on the beauty of personal character;[1] on perfect functioning rather than on perfect formation. With the Wordsworthian aspiration concerning the Sabbath—

> ". . . on which it is enough for me
> Not to be doing but to be"—

he could hardly sympathise sufficiently to grasp the meaning of it. Only the present, he repeats again and again, is ours. It is impossible to be deprived of the past or the future, for they do not now belong to us.[2]

[1] There are a few noteworthy exceptions, *e.g.*, ὅ τι ἂν τις ποιῇ ἢ λέγῃ, ἐμὲ δεῖ ἀγαθὸν εἶναι· ὡς ἂν εἰ ὁ χρυσός, ἢ ὁ σμάραγδος, ἢ ἡ πορφύρα τοῦτο ἀεὶ ἐλεγεν, ὅ τι ἂν τις ποιῇ ἢ λέγῃ, ἐμὲ δεῖ σμάραγδον εἶναι καὶ τὸ ἐμαυτοῦ χρῶμα ἔχειν. vii. 15. *Cf.* viii. 1; viii. 51. But they are not sufficiently numerous to affect the main result of his teaching.

[2] ii. 14. τὸ γὰρ παρὸν ἐστὶ μόνον οὗ στερίσκεσθει μέλλει, εἴπερ γε ἔχει καὶ τοῦτο μόνον, καὶ ὃ μὴ ἔχει τις, οὐκ ἀποβάλλει.

Even the permanent effects of action and suffering on character are largely ignored. Such things, he says, are like successive drifts of sand on the shore, things utterly indifferent;[1] to which a more philosophic thinker might with greater truth make reply, that Memory and Hope are among our richest possessions, and that what we are to-day is the result of what we have been and done, modified by what we hope to be and do.

The Christian writers, on the other hand, feel that the essential good and evil of action are concerned with their moral effects on others' characters, or at lowest with their permanent effects on the doer's character. Except when he is considering the effect of more or less systematic instruction, it is hardly too much to say that this feature of motived actions is quite ignored by Marcus Aurelius. It is certainly never brought into prominence.[2]

He seems to conceive of himself as an isolated unit face to face with an organised universe

[1] vii. 34 and vi. 32. *τὰ γὰρ μέλλοντα καὶ παρῳχηκότα ἐνεργήματα αὐτῆς, καὶ αὐτὰ ἤδη ἀδιάφορα.*

[2] Unless we except the "ninthly" of xi. 18.

of which he is indeed declared to be a member as well as a part;[1] but the claim to "membership" comes to little more than the assertion that a moral being, without material for the exercise of his morality, is something unthinkable.

For, though man is essentially a social being, each of us, it would seem, is unable to do more than illusory injury to his fellow. If another deals unjustly with me it makes no difference to me; he who does wrong, wrongs himself.[2] By analogy we might infer that it is equally impossible to confer other than illusory benefits (as indeed Marcus seems incidentally to admit in vi. 45).[3] Yet we find that the conferring of benefits is of all functions that which is most in conformity with the proper nature of man, so that he should be wholly satisfied with that alone, regardless of further results. "For what more wouldst thou have when thou hast done a man a

[1] vii. 13. *μέλος . . . μέρος.*

[2] *Cf.* x. 13; ix. 4 (quoted p. 60, note 1) and also viii. 55. *γενικῶς μὲν ἡ κακία οὐδὲν βλάπτει τὸν κόσμον, ἡ δὲ κατὰ μέρος οὐδὲν βλάπτει τὸν ἕτερον.*

[3] Quoted p. 61, note 1.

kindness? . . . As man is formed by Nature for acts of beneficence, when he has done anything beneficent or in any way subservient to the common interest, he has acted in conformity with the end for which he is constituted, and he gets what is his own." (ix. 42.[1]) Thus it seems that we can benefit our fellows, but can do them no harm; or else we must assert that we fulfil our higher nature in doing that which is illusory, gaining real benefit by conferring sham benefits. Or perhaps we may restate his position by saying that while he makes himself the servant of others on the lower ground (their physical needs, political institutions, &c.), he makes them subservient to himself on the higher—as material for the exercise of moral qualities, as models to be copied, or as evil examples to be shunned.

Had he in his *Meditations* pushed his analysis thus far, he would doubtless have recoiled from the conclusion. Yet the above fairly sums up the practical purport of his teaching,

[1] *τί γὰρ πλέον θέλεις εὖ ποιήσας ἄνθρωπον; . . . οὕτως καὶ ὁ ἄνθρωπος εὐεργετικὸς πεφυκώς, ὁπόταν τι εὐεργετικόν, ἢ ἄλλως εἰς τὰ μέσα συνεργητικὸν πράξῃ, πεποίηκε, πρὸς ὃ κατεσκεύασται, καὶ ἔχει τὸ ἑαυτοῦ.*

which, when probed to the bottom, may be described as being little more than the ethical equivalent of a crude subjective phenomenalism.

Happily, he is not always consistent with himself. He does admit the direct influence of mind upon mind when engaged in the conscious task of instruction. And in any case his subjective system of morals, which would be harmful if universally adopted, is only dangerous to the sole reader for whom the book is intended through its tendency to increase his already excessive pessimism. The good deeds, he must at times have felt, were scarce worth the doing, when their real, as distinguished from their illusory, benefits were to be found in their moral recoil on their author.

Marcus Aurelius strives hard to hold together two quite inconsistent positions. He wishes at once to assert and to deny his relatedness to the lower world, and to the commonwealth of man. "Wilt thou never, my soul, be full, self-sufficient, lacking nothing, without a want of any kind . . . not desiring time wherein thou shalt have longer enjoyment, or place,

or space, or pleasant climate, or harmonious society of men?"[1] Surely (we might interject), since men's duties are social, since "the universal nature has made rational beings for the sake of one another, to help one another according to their deserts,"[2] it is equally reasonable that they should seek the fruition of their work, the completion of their nature, in a society where they may live in harmony with all men, a Kingdom of Heaven whose coming they may reasonably pray should be hastened. But Marcus' strong duty-loving soul will only admit that man has a nature actively social, not a nature passively social (taking the word social, that is, in its ordinary sense as meaning "connected with humanity," and not in Marcus' customary use of it as implying membership of the animated material universe, towards which, as has been pointed out, man owes the passive duty of submission

[1] *ἔσῃ ποτὲ ἆρα, ὦ ψυχή, . . . πλήρης καὶ ἀνενδεής, καὶ οὐδὲν ἐπιποθοῦσα, οὐδὲ ἐπιθυμοῦσα οὐδενός, οὐδὲ χρόνου ἐν ᾧ ἐπὶ μακρότερον ἀπολαύσεις; οὐδὲ τόπου, ἢ χώρας, ἢ ἀέρων εὐκαιρίας, οὐδὲ ἀνθρώπων εὐαρμοστίας;* (x. 1.)

[2] *τῆς γὰρ τῶν ὅλων φύσεως κατεσκευακυίας τὰ λογικὰ ζῷα ἕνεκεν ἀλλήλων, ὥστε ὠφελεῖν μὲν ἄλληλα κατ' ἀξίαν . . .* (ix. 1.)

and resignation). His attention is focused wholly on the giving, never on the side of receiving. We are made for the sake of one another, to help one another—but not to be helped. The form of the sentence quoted (ix. 1), and of similar sentences, may make the action reciprocal; in its application it is certainly not treated as such; for Marcus has not so far stepped away from his self-centred point of vantage to look at his benevolent actions from the position of some other equal, rational, virtue-loving soul. Had he taken this step his *Meditations* would have won a more human tinge that would have made them ten times more lovable and ten times more valuable. But he does not. The bond that links him to humanity fails to link humanity to him. The currents of love and service run all one way. The philosopher, asserting needlessly his essentially social nature, remains a self-centred unsocial being, however potentially sociable, seeking self-satisfaction in two-sided activities which are seen from one side only, and perpetually failing, inevitably failing, to find it.

This confused attitude on the question of social service is partly a consequence of the Stoic pantheism. The conception of the world held by Marcus has never ceased to be that of a materialistic world, such as the defective imagination of the earlier Stoics pictured it. The highest spiritual qualities and activities are still clumsily thought of as having a material base. The commonwealth of Marcus' ethics is a material commonwealth, in which the isolated individual soul fights its battle without either giving or receiving any real help, except such as comes from the contemplation of the ordered beauty of the Whole. That which is social rather belongs to the lower planes of life. Fellowship of man with man is scarcely felt in the higher regions of spiritual activity; while with the Christian, whose Personal God is the God of Spirit and of truth, it is essentially in the spiritual sphere that the communion of saints is realised. Despite occasional utterances in the contrary sense, Marcus Aurelius' God is not normally thought of as a personal God. Now and again he gives the rein to his poetic (or shall we say

human ?) sensibilities, by speaking of Zeus willing this or that (just as he allows his fancy now and then to play with the prospect of a future life); but parallel passages show that it is little more than a trick of language. "The nature of the Universe prescribed to this man disease or mutilation or amputation or something similar." (v. 8.)[1] "And so, welcome all that befalls, even though it seems overhard; because it leads thither—to the health of the Universe and the welfare and well-being of Zeus. He would not have brought this on any man were it not useful for the whole." (v. 8.)[2] This is not the Heavenly Father of Christianity, Who, Himself a Spirit, is the guide and friend of children who are spiritual likewise.

From the point of view of the religious mind (whether Christian, Pythagorean, or

[1] *συνέταξε τούτῳ ἡ τῶν ὅλων φύσις νόσον ἢ πήρωσιν, ἢ ἀποβολήν, ἢ ἄλλο τι τῶν τοιούτων.* The pantheism is yet more explicit in iv. 40. *ὡς ἓν ζῷον τὸν κόσμον, μίαν οὐσίαν καὶ ψυχὴν μίαν ἐπέχον, συνεχῶς ἐπινοεῖν . . . κ.τ.λ.*

[2] *καὶ οὕτως ἀσπάζου πᾶν τὸ γινόμενον, κἂν ἀπηνέστερον δοκῇ, διὰ τὸ ἐκεῖσε ἄγειν, ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ κόσμου ὑγίειαν, καὶ τὴν τοῦ Διὸς εὐοδίαν καὶ εὐπραγίαν. οὐ γὰρ ἂν τοῦτό τινι ἔφερεν, εἰ μὴ τῷ ὅλῳ συνέφερεν.*

Platonist) the philosophy of the Stoic is defective owing to its imperfect realisation of the paramount importance of spiritual subjects. Firstly, in the self-regarding sphere, activities (in the broad sense of the word) are the prominent feature, rather than character; perfect functioning rather than perfect formation. Secondly, as regards our neighbours, social action is not considered sufficiently in its higher aspect, as affecting, that is, both one character and the other. Thirdly, as regards the Universe (which for the Stoic is more vividly conceived as related to himself than is his fellow man, and for the sake of which primarily he does his duty to his fellow man), the materialistic, impersonal aspect of the controlling Reason is made prominent, almost to the exclusion of the personal spiritual aspect.

The Stoic finds the centre of his ethical system within him. To be unswayed by emotion, to be master of one's self, to adapt one's whole being to what a sense of dignity rather than an enthusiasm for humanity would declare to be noblest, are the cardinal points of his philosophic system. To err is

to be unworthy of one's self and one's high position. The moral consequences to others are neglected as irrelevant, and forgotten.

The Christian teacher on the other hand, though dealing in frequent exhortation as regards the simpler questions of personal moral advance, is for ever urging his hearers on to better things for the sake of the unregenerate world outside. The Christian can never remain absolutely content as long as any member of the commonwealth of mankind stands outside the inner Kingdom of the children of light and righteousness. "Ye were grieved at the errors of those about" (writes Clement of Rome, chap. ii.); "ye accounted their shortcomings as your own."[1] Ignatius in his Epistles is more like one who is ordering a gigantic campaign, leading an invading host into the realms of heathen darkness, than a student of moral and religious theories. Unity, obedience, submission to authority, are his perpetual demands. "Cherish union, shun divisions, do nothing

[1] *ἐπὶ τοῖς παραπτώμασιν τοῖς πλησίον ἐπενθεῖτε· τὰ ὑστερήματα αὐτῶν ἴδια ἐκρίνετε.*

without the bishop" (Phil. vii.). "He who doeth anything apart from bishop and presbytery and deacons is not clean in his conscience" (Tral. vii.).[1] And all this with a view to the higher service of humanity as a whole.

To such a statement as that of Marcus Aurelius (v. 20, quoted p. 54),—that man may rightly become to us an indifferent thing—the Christian might effectively protest that what results from hate may also result from indifference. To seek self-satisfaction in indifference to others' moral status is equally to cut oneself off from the society of humanity; and the hope of such isolated self-satisfaction is a barren hope. Had the early Christians admitted its practicability, the epistles and exhortations of which we treat could never have been written. "Whosoever therefore," writes Ignatius (ad Eph. v.), "whosoever cometh not to the congregation doth thereby show his pride, and hath separated himself; for it is written 'God resisteth the proud.'"

It is in this attitude that we find the abiding

[1] *ὁ χωρὶς ἐπισκόπου καὶ πρεσβυτερίου καὶ διακόνων πράσσων τι, οὗτος οὐ καθαρός ἐστι τῇ συνειδήσει.*

strength of Christianity that has carried it safely through many dangers. However crude in other respects these early writings may be, their teaching always retained this genuinely social reference ; and thus Christian philosophy never atrophied, but has progressed steadily towards a fuller expression of itself. Stoicism tended inevitably towards a stationariness that involved decay. It had not within it the central principle of eternal life. For Marcus Aurelius " the love of neighbour is not an outgoing of personal affection, but at most a befriending care of kind ; it falls short of ' brotherhood ' (the term adopted in translation)—for it is not indeed direct from man to man, but transmitted through the cosmos.[1] It remains impersonal and generic, belonging to the same moral category as patriotism, or political fraternity, or devotion to a cause ; but, spread over a larger and less tangible object, it falls short of these in ardour of desire, and much more lacks the effusion, the

[1] *Cf.* the argument of ix. 1, where every failing is reduced to a form of impiety (ἀσέβεια) towards the nature of the universe.

joy, the impulsive energy and the quick indignations of altruistic love. Therefore to the last it condemns the Stoic to some lukewarmness of faith and ineffectiveness of personal appeal; and leaves him content 'to better men or bear with them,' 'to keep in charity with liars and rogues,' 'to blame none,' and to accept misunderstanding and dislike as normal items of experience."[1] "Stoic love is but an injunction of reason and a means to virtue;[2] Christian love is the open secret of the universe, and in itself the end of all."[3]

[1] Introd. to Rendall's *Marcus Aurelius Antoninus*, p. cxli.

[2] *Cf.* οὔπω σε καταληκτικῶς εὐφραίνει τὸ εὐεργετεῖν· ἔτι ὡς πρέπον αὐτὸ ψιλὸν ποιεῖς· οὔπω ὡς σαυτὸν εὖ ποιῶν. vii. 13.

[3] Myers's Essay on Marcus Aurelius (*Fortnightly Review*, May 1882).

CHAPTER IV

THE INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES—THE HIGHER AND THE LOWER IN MAN—SUMMARY OF VIEWS ON THE CONDUCT OF LIFE

In Book vii. chap. 55, Marcus Aurelius sets out in systematic form his conception of the whole duty of man. Practical philosophy is concerned (he says) firstly with the relations of the individual to the rest of mankind, and to the personified whole of things—the study of "social" duties (including that of resignation to the Will of God); secondly, with the relations of man's higher to his lower nature—the study of self-control; and thirdly, with the relation of reason to itself and to the world considered objectively—the study of sincerity and truth.[1] "The prime principle

[1] Compare the use of the three complementary and contrasted adjectives, *σύμφρων*, *ὑπέρφρων*, *ἔμφρων* in x. 8, &c.

then in man's constitution is the social. And the second is not to yield to the persuasions of the body, for it is the peculiar office of the rational and intelligent motions to put bounds to themselves, and never to be overpowered by the motion either of the senses or of the appetites, for both are animal; but the intellectual desire to hold the supremacy and not to be overpowered by the others. And with good reason, for they are formed by nature to make use of all the others. The third thing in the rational constitution is freedom from tendencies to precipitate action and error. Let then the guiding principle go straight forward, holding fast to these, and it has what is its own."[1]

The discussion of what is intended by the words "Nature" and "Reason" has already

[1] τὸ μὲν οὖν προηγούμενον ἐν τῇ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου κατασκευῇ τὸ κοινωνικόν ἐστι. δεύτερον δὲ τὸ ἀνένδοτον πρὸς τὰς σωματικὰς πείσεις. λογικῆς γὰρ καὶ νοερᾶς κινήσεως ἴδιον, περιορίζειν ἑαυτήν, καὶ μήποτε ἡττᾶσθαι μήτε αἰσθητικῆς μήτε ὁρμητικῆς κινήσεως. ζῳώδεις γὰρ ἑκάτεραι· ἡ δὲ νοερὰ ἐθέλει πρωτιστεύειν καὶ μὴ κατακρατεῖσθαι ὑπ' ἐκείνων. δικαίως γε· πέφυκε γὰρ χρηστικὴ πᾶσιν ἐκείνοις. τρίτον ἐν τῇ λογικῇ κατασκευῇ τὸ ἀπρόπτωτον καὶ ἀνεξαπάτητον. τούτων οὖν ἐχόμενον τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν εὐθέα περαινέτω, καὶ ἔχει τὰ ἑαυτοῦ. vii. 55.

carried us into an estimate of Marcus Aurelius' conception of social duties. This chapter will deal with the second and third of his three main principles—the intellectual duties and the duty of self-control.

The inclusion of intellectual duties has at first hearing quite a modern ring. But we have not to read far before we are struck by the contrast between the ethics of Marcus Aurelius and the ethics of to-day in their different attitudes towards fulness and complexity of the mental life. We all feel that a " full life " is a thing eminently desirable in itself, and that fulness implies complexity and variety. An empty life induces compassionate feeling more than a life of sorrows. We are beginning to realise that the best way to combat evil tendencies is to evoke energies in nobler directions, in such ways that vice comes to seem, by comparison, uninteresting and unattractive. We even find in a modern treatise on ethics the dictum, that " the acts characterised by the more complex motives and the more involved thoughts have all along been of higher authority

for guidance."[1] The wider the man's range of experience and the more varied his faculties, the higher we feel him to be, the more truly a man, the more remote from mere animalism.

But the praises of Marcus are all for the simple life, contented with a small range of duties, not reaching out to what is unnecessary or seeking for new experiences. He praises his predecessor for his indifference to novelty and change, "always remaining in the same places and activities" (i. 16).[2] "Engage in few forms of activity" (he writes); "for this brings not only the satisfaction that comes from right forms of activity, but also that from a restricted range of activity" (iv. 24).[3] "Simplify your life,"[4] is a sentiment he repeats

[1] Spencer's *Data of Ethics*, p. 106.

[2] *ἀλλὰ καὶ τόποις καὶ πράγμασι τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἐνδιατριπτικόν.* I. 16.

[3] "*ὀλίγα πρῆσσε,*" *φησὶν,* "*εἰ μέλλεις εὐθυμήσειν*". . . *τοῦτο γὰρ οὐ μόνον τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ καλῶς πράσσειν εὐθυμίαν φέρει, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ ὀλίγα πράσσειν.* (iv. 24.)

[4] *ἁπλωσον σεαυτόν.* iv. 26. Not altogether dissimilar is Hermas' condemnation of *ἐπιθυμία πράξεων πολλῶν* (Mand. vi. 2); but the Christian has his attention fixed on the consequences of needless activity in multiplying temptations, rather than on the attractiveness of a dignified simplicity for simplicity's sake. *Cf.* Hermas

again and again. "Run ever by the shortest path: the shortest path is that approved by Nature."[1] Everything not clearly connected with the central purpose of man's life he accounts alien. "One must set one's life in order along a single line of activity."[2] The needless enterprises of an Alexander or a Pompey amount to sheer slavery (viii. 3), such as the wise man avoids.[3]

Sim. iv. *ἀπέχου δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν πολλῶν πράξεων καὶ οὐδέποτε οὐδὲν διαμαρτήσεις· οἱ γὰρ τὰ πολλὰ πράσσοντες πολλὰ καὶ ἁμαρτάνουσι περισπώμενοι περὶ τὰς πράξεις αὐτῶν καὶ μηδὲν δουλεύοντες τῷ Κυρίῳ ἑαυτῶν.*

[1] *ἐπὶ τὴν σύντομον ἀεὶ τρέχε· σύντομος δὲ ἡ κατὰ φύσιν.* iv. 51.

[2] *συντιθέναι δεῖ τὸν βίον κατὰ μίαν πρᾶξιν.* viii. 32. *Cf.* *ληροῦσι γὰρ καὶ διὰ πράξεων οἱ κεκμηκότες τῷ βίῳ, καὶ μὴ ἔχοντες σκοπόν, ἐφ' ὃν πᾶσαν ὁρμὴν καὶ καθάπαξ φαντασίαν ἀπευθυνοῦσιν.* ii. 7. *οὐδὲν ἀθλιώτερον τοῦ πάντα κύκλῳ ἐκπεριερχομένου, καὶ τὰ νέρθεν γῆς (φησὶν) ἐρευνῶντος, καὶ τὰ ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς . . . κ.τ.λ.* ii. 13.

[3] In the essay which we have already quoted, F. W. H. Myers, though with a somewhat different purpose, has called attention to the striking omission from the list of Marcus' benefactors in Book I. of the name of the Emperor Hadrian, the indefatigable traveller, investigator, and student of literatures and philosophies. "The boy thus raised to empire has passed by Hadrian, who gave him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, for Severus, who taught him to disdain them all." (*Fortnightly Review*, 1882.)

What then had Marcus distinctively in view? Practically this only—the attainment of philosophic culture, in the sense of an acquired capacity to analyse moral facts,[1] rather than any merely academic training in logic or rhetoric. To look closely at every circumstance and experience, and assign to it its proper place in the scale of importance;[2] to read not superficially, but so as to get at the heart of an author's meaning;[3] not to be led astray by appearances or by opinion, but to maintain firmly his own estimate of intrinsic values[4]—these are all, to him, distinctly moral duties, duties of quite a high order. To this acquired power he looks largely for the means to overcome the allurements of sense. Analyse a musical perform-

[1] *Cf.* iii. 9. *τὴν ὑπολῃπτικὴν δύναμιν σέβε. ἐν ταύτῃ τὸ πᾶν, ἵνα ὑπόληψις τῷ ἡγεμονικῷ σου μηκέτι ἐγγένηται ἀνακόλουθος τῇ φύσει, καὶ τῇ τοῦ λογικοῦ ζῴου κατασκευῇ. αὕτη δὲ ἐπαγγέλλεται ἀπροπτωσίαν . . .* κ.τ.λ.

[2] *οὕτως δεῖ παρ' ὅλον τὸν βίον ποιεῖν, καὶ ὅπου λίαν ἀξιόπιστα τὰ πράγματα φαντάζεται, ἀπογυμνοῦν αὐτά.* vi. 13. *Cf.* viii. 11, 13.

[3] *τὸ ἀκριβῶς ἀναγινώσκειν καὶ μὴ ἀρκεῖσθαι περινοοῦντα ὁλοσχερῶς.* (i. 7.)

[4] *μηδὲ τοῖς περιλαλοῦσι ταχέως συγκατατίθεσθαι.* (i. 7.) *Cf.* v. 3, iii. 15.

ance into its component chords and single notes, and it will be impossible, he thinks, for the self-respecting philosopher to hold it in high esteem. Do the same with life, or with fame, and the same conclusions must be drawn. Man is a mere speck on a clod of earth, and his life a brief moment between a preceding and a succeeding eternity. Fame is the applause of succeeding generations of individually contemptible men.[1]

The Christian writers (and especially the uncultured author of the Epistle of Barnabas[2]) refer often to the importance of Knowledge and Understanding. But little or nothing is said about the training and conduct of the mind. No more than Marcus Aurelius have

[1] It is rather strange that it has not occurred to him that a virtuous action might in the same way be split up into its component indifferent parts, and thus virtue be proved worthless likewise; or that if "indifferent" things are declared to have no value because short-lived, virtuous actions must for similar reasons be held of no account also. But his purpose after all is not to prove what needs no proving—the axiomatic truth that virtue is the one thing worth while—but to raise additional fortifications between himself and temptation.

[2] *E.g.*, σοφία, σύνεσις, ἐπιστήμη, γνῶσις. c. ii.

they realised the indispensability of culture to the full rounded development of character.[1] Indeed, the wisdom of the wise is rather looked on by them as a hindrance than as an aid to the higher life; even as the monastics of later centuries tended to look upon the body as a clog on the soul's development, and were ready to weaken and ill-treat it as an enemy to righteousness. Both of these one-sided tendencies were temporary; and neither was ever universal; but they cannot be called unimportant phases in the history of morals.

The Knowledge and Wisdom which the Christian writers have in view are rather a knowledge of the express commands of God (especially as found in the inspired books), and a wisdom which results inevitably from the will to do the will of God, than such knowledge and wisdom as follow either on an infinite taking of pains in the realm of analytical ethics, or a wide experience of the complex affairs of life. "Where the Lord dwelleth

[1] "The Church appears to have been content that grammar and rhetoric schools should be entirely secular, down to the fall of the Empire" (Bigg, *The Church's Task under the Roman Empire*, p. 25).

there also is much Understanding"[1]—is the underlying sentiment in all such references.

Marcus Aurelius too, though he shows himself a strong believer in intellectual discipline, praising his predecessor's "habit of careful inquiry in all matters of deliberation" (i. 16), and the teaching of Rusticus as to thoroughness in reading (i. 7), not only despises such mere mental gymnastic as seems to have no practical moral value, but even looks upon it as an enemy of moral development, very much in the same spirit as contemporary Christianity did. Thus he declares himself indebted to Rusticus for being taught "to abstain from rhetoric and poetry, and fine writing" (i. 7). "From him" (he says again) "I learned not to be led astray to sophistic emulation, nor to writing on speculative matters, nor to delivering little hortatory orations" (i. 7). And he thanks the gods that he "did not make more proficiency in rhetoric, poetry, and the other studies" (i. 17).

[1] *ὅπου γὰρ ὁ κύριος κατοικεῖ, ἐκεῖ καὶ σύνεσις πολλή.* (Hermas, Mand. x. 1.)

THE HIGHER AND THE LOWER IN MAN

Let us now turn to the Christian and Stoic treatment of the relation of the higher to the lower in man.

In all ages moralists of all nations have been so strongly aware of the eternal inner conflict in the life of the best of men, that they have continually found it necessary to analyse man's nature into a good and an evil principle waging perpetual warfare. But the opposing forces that have been selected for the antithesis have varied with different schools and different eras of thought. The Stoic found the conflicting elements to be Reason and Emotion; as the early Christian tended to imagine a natural hostility between soul and body; while certain of the modern fanatical sects of Christians have even brought forward the bewildering antithesis of Faith and Reason, in such a way as to identify Reason itself with the evil principle in Man.

The difference between Stoic and orthodox Christian is something much more important than a mere difference of emphasis. The Christian teachers ally themselves with what is good in emotion as in the body itself—with

all that may " project the soul on its lone way." The Stoic wishes to annihilate,[1] where the Christian is content to subdue and adapt. " Not only ignoble and selfish emotions are to be suppressed, but also the most ennobling and energetic, all that aspire beyond the present, all that do well to be angry in resisting antagonism to wrong, all that kindle duty into desire and suffuse it with emotional warmth. 'Teach men or bear with them,' 'Blame none,' become aphorisms of the virtue, which moves only within the prescriptions of the individual reason."[2]

[1] " Erase imagination : check impetuous passions : extinguish appetite : maintain the guiding principle in authority over itself." *ἐξαλεῖψαι φαντασίαν· στῆσαι ὁρμήν· σβέσαι ὄρεξιν· ἐφ' ἑαυτῷ ἔχειν τὸ ἡγεμονικόν* (ix. 7. *Cf.* vii. 29.) In Ign. Phil. i., we find a curious echo of Stoic phraseology (*τὸ ἀκίνητον αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ ἀόργητον ἐν πάσῃ ἐπιεικείᾳ Θεοῦ*). But one feels that the bearing of it is different. Still more when in Rom. iv. he writes *νῦν μανθάνω δεδεμένος μηδὲν ἐπιθυμεῖν*, we cannot avoid noting the deep contrast with Stoic thought underlying a superficial resemblance. *Cf.* also Polyc. v. *καλὸν γὰρ τὸ ἀνακόπτεσθαι ἀπὸ τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ὅτι πᾶσα ἐπιθυμία κατὰ τοῦ πνεύματος στρατεύεται*,—which is closer to the Stoic attitude.

[2] Introduction to Rendall's *Marcus Aurelius Antoninus*, p. cxxxiii.

Few parts of the Stoic doctrine were assimilated by the Roman character as readily as those relating to moral self-respect and dignity; and Marcus Aurelius, a Roman and an emperor, an heir to the grand traditions of Roman history, adopts the Stoic teaching in its fullest meaning. Side by side with the assertion that man is essentially a social being, and that his social character is his highest and most distinctive quality, we find the reiterated command that the philosopher must rise superior to all perturbations, because the intellectual part of him claims the sovereignty within him, all else being formed by nature for the service of reason.[1] This is not put forward by the Stoic as a subordinate truth. Admittedly man, as a social being, finds the fullest satisfaction in social efforts. "When thou hast done a good act" (writes Marcus) "and another

[1] It must not be forgotten, though it is difficult at times to remember, that the Stoic metaphysic is saturated with materialistic ideas, and that Marcus Aurelius in his more academic moments assents to them. The Stoic exhorts to the subjection of the lower faculties, while the Christian talks of the subjection of the flesh. But the former accepts a theory not less but more materialistic than the latter.

has received it, why dost thou still look for a third thing besides these—the reputation of having done well, or the receiving of a recompense? It is useful to act according to nature. Do not then be tired of receiving what is useful by doing it to others." (vii. 73, 74.)[1] "As man is formed by nature to acts of beneficence, when he has done anything beneficent or in any way conducive to the common interest, he has acted conformably to the purpose for which he is constituted, and he gets what is his own." (ix. 42.)[2] But though this is the case, it is an equally important truth, in Marcus' view, that the lower in man must yield to the higher because it is the higher. He would not perhaps feel any invalidity in the argument of J. S. Mill, that the body should be taken care of because "by squandering our health we disable ourselves from rendering

[1] ὅταν σὺ εὖ πεποιηκὼς ᾖς καὶ ἄλλος εὖ πεπονθὼς, τί ἐπιζητεῖς τρίτον παρὰ ταῦτα, ὥσπερ οἱ μωροί, τὸ καὶ δόξαι εὖ πεποιηκέναι ἢ τὸ ἀμοιβῆς τυχεῖν; οὐδεὶς κάμνει ὠφελούμενος. ὠφέλεια δὲ πρᾶξις κατὰ φύσιν. μὴ οὖν κάμνε ὠφελούμενος, ἐν ᾧ ὠφελεῖς (vii. 73, 74).

[2] οὕτως καὶ ὁ ἄνθρωπος εὐεργετικὸς πεφυκώς, ὁπόταν τι εὐεργετικὸν ἢ ἄλλως εἰς τὰ μέσα συνεργητικὸν πράξῃ, πεποίηκε, πρὸς ὃ κατεσκεύασται, καὶ ἔχει τὸ ἑαυτοῦ (ix. 42).

services to our fellow creatures." But it would almost certainly appear to him as an inversion of "natural" ethics. And thus, when he asserts that "in whatever degree a man's mind approaches to complete freedom from passion, in the same degree is it nearer to strength" (xi. 18),[1] the word "strength" must not be taken to mean capacity to influence others by a life of strenuous activity, but merely the power of avoiding inner perturbations.[2] In other words the dictum, like many another of Marcus' aphorisms, must be read as a sheer tautology.

The appeal, then, is not to the consequences of yielding to emotion, but to the sense of dignity. "It is a convenient thing to remember in time of mental disturbance that anger is not a quality worthy of a man, but that gentleness and mildness, even as they are more proper to humanity, are more becoming to a virile man." (xi. 18.)[3] Personal dignity,

[1] ὅσῳ γὰρ ἀπαθείᾳ τοῦτο οἰκειότερον, τοσούτῳ καὶ δυνάμει.

[2] *Cf.* xi. 18. "Just as grief is a sign of weakness, so is anger: both imply injury and surrender." ὥσπερ ἡ λύπη ἀσθενοῦς οὕτως καὶ ἡ ὀργή.

[3] πρόχειρον δὲ ἐν ταῖς ὀργαῖς, ὅτι οὐχὶ τὸ θυμοῦσθαι ἀνδρικόν, ἀλλὰ τὸ πρᾷον καὶ ἥμερον, ὥσπερ ἀνθρωπικώτερον, οὕτως καὶ ἀῤῥενικώτερον.

rather than love of others, is the safeguard on which he relies to save him from degeneration; it is the rock on which his fortress is built. "Live as on a mountain. For it matters not whether Here or There, provided one lives Everywhere as if the universe were his city. Let men see, give them to observe and examine, a real man living the natural life." (x. 15.)[1] The words at once call up the familiar passages of the gospels: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven"; "a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid"; (alongside of which we may set Polycarp's exhortation: "having your conversation free from reproach among the Gentiles, in order that ye yourselves may receive praise from your noble works, and that the Lord may not be blasphemed among you." (c. x.)[2] Diversity of ultimate intention combined with simi-

[1] *ζῆσον ὡς ἐν ὄρει. οὐδὲν γὰρ διαφέρει, ἐκεῖ ἢ ὧδε, ἐάν τις πανταχοῦ ὡς ἐν πόλει τῷ κόσμῳ. ἰδέτωσαν, ἱστορησάτωσαν οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἄνθρωπον ἀληθινὸν κατὰ φύσιν ζῶντα.*

[2] *τὴν ἀναστροφὴν ὑμῶν ἀνεπίλημπτον ἔχοντες ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, ἵνα ἐκ τῶν καλῶν ἔργων ὑμῶν καὶ ὑμεῖς ἔπαινον λάβητε καὶ ὁ Κύριος μὴ βλασφημῆται ἐν ὑμῖν.*

larity of expression could scarcely be carried farther. Think of your dignity, commands the one; remember your weaker brethren, is the appeal of the other.

This perfectionist doctrine of the Stoic—the annihilation of emotion as an end desirable in itself and not merely as a means to an end—a doctrine loosely related to the attainment of least unhappiness, but not consciously held to be related to the social duties—finds perhaps its nearest parallel, among the early Christian writings, in their teachings on the subject of chastity.

Very prominent in the religious teaching of all centuries, but much subordinated among the Stoics (and still more among the Cynics) is the conception of freedom from particular forms of defilement as an essential characteristic of moral perfection—"purity" of some kind or other, with an unanalysed and more or less mystical sanction. This sanction attaching to the guilt of defilement causes an intense feeling of horror and repulsion at any breach of the code in others, and an almost terrible

feeling of degradation and abasement after any violation of it by the religious person himself. Some such awesomeness always attaches to what the Christian calls "sin," as distinct from intellectual shortcomings and errors.

The authority of conscience gains enormously in effective strength when it is thus reinforced by such an ideal of "purity," however crudely materialistic. It seems to be somehow a necessary factor in the evolution of morality. First, clean cups and garments and special laws as to food; then, freedom from gluttony, drunkenness, lasciviousness; then, separation from revengeful, envious, and uncharitable thoughts, and avoidance of all shades of untruth: such is the gradual development of the idea of purity.

Generally among the Christian writers it is sexual purity that is most strongly insisted on (though with this we may perhaps place the defilements connected with idolatry, such as the eating of meats offered to idols). But the idea may be transferred to some quasi-ceremonial duty or even to the necessity

of keeping pure and undefiled the body of Christian dogma.[1]

This attitude towards virtue and vice —the shrinking from sin as uncleanness, the attraction towards everything which can be connected with purity — is what would perhaps most forcibly strike an unfamiliar reader when turning from the heathen philosophers to the early Christian writers. It is closely connected with that view of the relations of God and man which has already been characterised as a sense of the alienation of humanity, requiring to be overcome by a doctrine of redemption and atonement; and in its extremer forms tends to produce the fantastic theologies of Marcionite and Gnostic writers as well as the frantic asceticisms of later monasticism. In this emphasis on "purity" we have the Christian counterpart to the Stoic glorification of personal dignity. Both ideas are convenient

1 *Cf.* Ign. Eph. xvi. *εἰ οὖν οἱ κατὰ σάρκα ταῦτα πράσσοντες ἀπέθανον, πόσῳ μᾶλλον ἐὰν πίστιν Θεοῦ ἐν κακοδιδασκαλίᾳ φθείρῃ, ὑπὲρ ἧς Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἐσταυρώθη· ὁ τοιοῦτος ῥυπαρὸς γενόμενος εἰς τὸ πῦρ το ἄσβεστον χωρήσει, ὁμοίως καὶ ὁ ἀκούων αὐτοῦ.*

practical aids[1] to the subordination of the lower to the higher, the flesh to the spirit; though both may be misleading guides, especially when they result in our condemning unmercifully those who are not moved by the same attractive and repulsive forces as ourselves.

Marcus Aurelius, if I read him aright, would have little sympathy with the Christian horror of bodily defilement as an evil in itself. He would shrink, no doubt, as sternly as Ignatius or Paul from sexual offences, but the dread that would be uppermost in his mind would be the thought of reason being shaken on its throne by irrational passion. He would not easily comprehend the mental attitude suggested by such utterances as these: "Keep your flesh as the temple of God" (Ign. Phil. 7);[2] "knowing that they are the altar of God" (Polyc. iv.); "corrupters of houses" (*i.e.*, their own bodies) "shall not inherit the

[1] *Cf.* the partial recognition of this in the word *πρόχειρον* in M. Aurelius xi. 18 (quoted above); and elsewhere xii. 24, ix. 42, vii. 64, &c.

[2] *τὴν σάρκα ὑμῶν ὡς ναὸν Θεοῦ τηρεῖτε.*

Kingdom of God" (Ign. Eph. 16);[1] "for the Logos again says to us, 'If any one kiss a second time because it has given him pleasure (he sins)'; adding, 'Therefore the kiss, or rather the salutation, should be given with the greatest care, since, if there be mixed with it the least defilement of thought, it excludes us from eternal life'" (apocryphal utterance quoted by Athenagoras).[2]

The absence of the peculiar feeling of horror[3] at "sin" means that Marcus Aurelius has scarcely any bias in the direction of asceticism for its own sake. He certainly valued

[1] *οἱ οἰκοφθόροι βασιλείαν Θεοῦ οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν.* The explanation is Lightfoot's. Possibly "corrupters of bodies" (not "their own bodies") should be the rendering.

[2] *πάλιν ἡμῖν λέγοντος τοῦ Λόγου· ἐάν τις διὰ τοῦτο ἐκ δευτέρου καταφιλήσῃ, ὅτι ἥρεσεν αὐτῷ· καὶ ἐπιφέροντος· οὕτως οὖν ἀκριβώσασθαι τὸ φίλημα μᾶλλον δὲ τὸ προσκύνημα δεῖ, ὡς, εἴπου μίκρον τῇ διανοίᾳ παραθολωθείη, ἔξω ἡμᾶς τῆς αἰωνίου τιθέντος ζωῆς.* Supp. 32. *Cf.* ii. Clem. 9. *δεῖ οὖν ἡμᾶς ὡς ναὸν Θεοῦ φυλάσσειν τὴν σάρκα.* Hermas, Mand. v. *μετὰ τοῦ σκεύους ἐν ᾧ [τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον] κατοικεῖ λειτουργήσει τῷ Θεῷ ἐν ἱλαρότητι.* Barnabas iv. *γενώμεθα ναὸς τέλειος τῷ Θεῷ. Ibid.* vi. *ναὸς γὰρ ἅγιος τῷ Κυρίῳ τὸ κατοικητήριον ἡμῶν τῆς καρδίας.* 2 Clem. xiv. *ὁ ὑβρίσας τὴν σάρκα ὕβρισεν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν.*

[3] *Cf.* for instance v. 9 (quoted in chap. v. p. 110).

such moderate self-discipline as "the use of a plank bed and a skin" (i. 6)—practices that strengthen the will without cost to the body; and he praises that reasonable care of his health which brought it about that his predecessor very seldom stood in need of a physician (i. 16). But the body is thought of as a means to rational activity; never as a hindrance to it. There is none of that feeling, imported from Gnosticism and the Orient, that colours, however slightly, many of the Christian references to "the flesh"—the implication that it is almost a Satanic creation naturally hostile to righteousness.[1] Even in Paul we see traces

[1] Two conflicting tendencies of thought mark the early Christian teaching on this point. On the one hand, the body must be kept in subjection because it is that which is most opposed to the divine. (*Cf.* καταγηράσκοντας ἀγάμους ἐλπίδι τοῦ μᾶλλον συνέσεσθαι τῷ Θεῷ. Athenag. Suppl. 33.) On the other hand, it is described as the temple of the Holy Spirit, so that sexual offences, and, with even stronger emphasis, cannibalism, are the most serious of sins; the body and the spirit must equally be kept pure, for the body is divine, and equally with the spirit partakes in the resurrection. The two lines of thought appear most curiously combined in the apocryphal utterance given by Athenagoras and quoted above.

of the conflict required before the more sane and wholesome view can be accepted in its entirety; and it is largely to the prominence necessarily given to the doctrine of the resurrection of the body that is due its final triumph in orthodox catholicism. To Marcus, the body, if despised at all, is despised as animal.[1] But even this contempt can never be pushed far, as it is held in check by the Stoic metaphysic with its demand that even the most spiritual activities must have a material basis.

Turning from this particular class of applications of the notion of purity, we are forced to admit that one of the greater benefits for which the world is indebted to Christianity consists in the transference of this mystical sense of evil in defilement, at first attached to predominantly external facts (such as the ceremonies of eating and drinking), to the distinctively moral region of internal tendencies; accompanied by a systematic contracting of the area of "sin" on the one side, and an expansion of it on the other. Thus Ignatius places side by side pollution of the flesh and pollution

[1] *Cf.* vii. 55. ζῳώδεις γὰρ.

of the orthodox faith (Eph. xvi.); Polycarp adds, "If one does not abstain from covetousness he will be defiled by idolatry" (xi.);[1] and Hermas goes yet further: "Liars set at nought the Lord . . . for they received from Him a spirit free from lies. If they give this back a lying spirit they pollute the commandment of the Lord" (Mand. iii.).[2]

If the feelings of horror and disgust are thus carried up from the lower to the higher regions of moral conflict, an immense advantage is gained; and early Christianity did much towards effecting this advance. But in so far as sexual questions and the aberrations of the procreative instinct alone bear this particular stigma of uncleanness, there is no gain, but rather loss. We are the poorer for the abiding necessity of shrinking from one half of our nature. We are the weaker because subject

[1] *ἐάν τις μὴ ἀπέχηται φιλαργυρίας ὑπὸ εἰδωλολατρείας μιανθήσεται.* (Polyc. xi.)

[2] *ἐμίαναν τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ Κυρίου.* *Cf.* Mand. x. 3, *μεμιγμένη οὖν ἡ λύπη μετὰ τῆς ἐντεύξεως οὐκ ἀφίησι τὴν ἔντευξιν ἀναβῆναι καθαρὰν ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ.* *Cf.* also *μιαινόμενον ὑπὸ τῆς ὀξυχολίας* and *μιαίνεται ἡ μακροθυμία.* (Mand. v. 1.)

to the combined attraction and repulsion which result from the distinctive character of the special prohibition ; and because exposed to the ensuing moral disfigurement consequent on what is frequently an unnecessary internal conflict. In the beginnings of moral development there is gain in the recognition of a definite limited sphere for the practice of self-restraint. But the moral energies of upward-striving man are liable to be exhausted in the struggle, and his attention to be drawn away from the higher forms of self-restraint ; so that what was a blessing becomes a hindrance, and what was to help us on our way comes to check our further advance.

Marcus Aurelius seeks to annihilate emotion, not because it is a hindrance to right social activity, but because it is unworthy of the self-sufficing man, and therefore an evil in itself. The Christian Fathers desire to preserve the purity of the body, not expressly because bodily health is essential towards right social activity, but because the body is an integral part of man[1] to be honoured as a gift of God

1 "Listen then," said he ; "preserve this thy flesh

which abides even after death. Thus continence and the resurrection are bracketed together as almost interdependent.[1] And not only incontinence, but suicide, abortion, and,

pure and unpolluted in order that the spirit dwelling in it may bear witness to it, and that thy flesh may be justified. See that it never enter into thine heart that this thy flesh is perishable, and that thou misuse it in any uncleanness. If thou pollute thy flesh thou wilt pollute also the Holy Spirit, and if thou pollute thy flesh thou wilt not live. . . . . For both of these (body and spirit) are common, and separately they cannot be polluted. Therefore, preserve them both pure and thou wilt live to God." (Hermas, Sim. v. 7.) Compare, also, the whole argument of Athenagoras in favour of the resurrection of the body.

[1] "In the Acta Theclae . . . . . , the contents of [Paul's] preaching are described as λόγος Θεοῦ περὶ ἐγκρατείας καὶ ἀναστάσεως (the word of God upon self-control and the resurrection). The last-named pair of ideas are to be taken as mutually supplementary; the resurrection or Eternal Life is certain, but it is conditioned by ἐγκράτεια, which is, therefore, put first." (Harnack, p. 112.) *Cf.* Hermas, Vis. ii. 3, καὶ ἡ ἁπλότης σου καὶ ἡ πολλὴ ἐγκράτεια, ταῦτα σέσωκέ σε, ἐὰν ἐμμείνῃς, καὶ πάντας σώζει τοὺς τὰ τοιαῦτα ἐργαζομένους. *Cf.* also Vis. iii. 8. ὃς ἂν οὖν ἀκολουθήσῃ αὐτῇ [Ἐγκρατείᾳ] μακάριος γίνεται ἐν τῇ ζωῇ αὐτοῦ . . . ὅτι ἐὰν ἀφέξηται πάσης ἐπιθυμίας πονηρᾶς, κληρονομήσει ζωὴν αἰώνιον. *Cf.* Mand. i.; *cf.* 2 Clem. xv. οὐκ οἶομαι δὲ ὅτι μικρὰν συμβουλίαν ἐποιησάμην περὶ ἐγκρατείας ἣν ποιήσας τις οὐ μετανοήσει, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἑαυτὸν σώσει καὶ ἐμὲ τὸν συμβουλεύσαντα.

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with unexpected emphasis, cannibalism,[1] are put forward as sins of the first order.

Now, few forces act more beneficently in the evolution of character than the recognition of self-restraint in sexual matters as a social necessity. A nation like the Indian, in which early marriage is the universal practice, suffers incalculable loss from the higher point of view. It lacks one of the most important factors required for the growth of a deep national morality. The early Christian writers, by affixing indelibly the stigma of impurity to all forms of lack of restraint of the procreative instinct, and its various aberrations, have enormously strengthened the individual conscience in its struggle against the flesh.[2] But by taking the attention away from the social consequences of unrestraint and turning it almost exclusively to the self-regarding aspect

[1] Theoph. ad Autol. iii. 15. *δύνανται . . . συμφύρεσθαι ταῖς ἀθεμίτοις μίξεσιν, ἢ τὸ ἀθεώτατον πάντων, σαρκῶν ἀνθρωπείων ἐφάπτεσθαι.* *Cf.* iii. 4. *Cf.* Athenag. Resurr. viii.

[2] The completeness of their victory in many cases is shown by the necessity in Ignatius' time of warning against the spiritual pride of asceticism (ad Polyc. iv. 3, v. 2). *Cf.* Dobschütz, *Christian Life in the Primitive Church*, p. 249.

of the matter they have done much to destroy the socially educative value of self-restraint. The least important aspect of the evil is emphasised and magnified. A duty towards one's neighbour has been twisted into a duty towards God;[1] and while obedience is given more readily, as to an authoritative command, it

1 The same bias is to be noted in connection with the duty of charity. Though the need of inquiry and the educative value of industry are both put well to the front at times, there is a marked tendency to find in almsgiving a positive benefit to the soul of the giver without any reference to the effect on the receiver. "Let thine alms sweat in thine hands till thou knowest to whom to give" (says the Didache, i. 6); and instructions are given to endeavour to check idle begging (xii. 4). But in 2 Clem. we are told that almsgiving is, as it were, a form of repentance from sin; that fasting is more powerful than prayer and alms than both—it being apparently assumed that all three duties are of the same self-regarding order. "Almsgiving lightens the burden of sin," the writer adds,—*καλὸν οὖν ἐλεημοσύνη ὡς μετάνοια ἁμαρτίας . . . κρείσσων νηστεία προσευχῆς, ἐλεημοσύνη δὲ ἀμφοτέρων . . . ἐλεημοσύνη γὰρ κούφισμα ἁμαρτίας γίνεται.* (2 Clem. xvi.) "From the apostolic counsels down to Cyprian's great work *De Opere et Eleemosynis* there stretches one long line of injunctions, in the course of which ever-increasing stress is laid upon the importance of alms to the religious position of the donor, and upon the prospect of a future recompense" (Harnack, *Expansion of Christianity*, i. 190).

loses its chief significance, by becoming a dead and meaningless obedience, of little value by itself as an effective force in the direction of moral advance.

To sum up these two chapters dealing with Marcus Aurelius' teaching on the conduct of life: We find that he recognises three sets of duties, of which the first two stand on an equal footing, while the third is of subordinate importance.

(*A*) Man is a social being; and just as the patriot is bound, firstly, to assist his fellow citizens wherever possible, and, secondly, to accept submissively the State's decrees; so man, as man, ought firstly to confer benefits on his fellow man (though these benefits belong necessarily to the lower planes of life, because each is a self-sufficing unit, having his own welfare in his own hands alone), and, secondly, he ought to receive contentedly whatever is allotted to him by the personified Whole of things, as the only consistently pious attitude.

(*B*) Because the reasoning faculty is the

highest element in man, all other faculties ought to be subordinated to it, in such a way that the dignity of Reason may never be infringed, and its equability in no way affected.

(*C*) The intellect should be cultivated so as to enable one to estimate accurately the relative importance of actions or events, with a view especially to the simplification of life.

The Christian Fathers would agree :

(*A*) That men are intended to be of mutual service; but they would, on the whole (though with considerable qualifications), consider that the value of conferring a benefit lies more especially in its arousing a proper feeling both in the person benefited and in the benefactor; and would hold that the chief services to be rendered concern the higher self and its immortal interests. Their attitude with regard to resignation is similar to that of M. Aurelius.

(*B*) Because the body is " the temple of the Holy Spirit " (not because it is inferior to the higher faculties), it must be preserved pure (rather than kept from disturbing the higher faculties).

(*C*) Early Christianity ignores intellectual

duties and despises (or even dreads) intellect, because "not many wise" are chosen, and "the Greeks" find in the gospel "foolishness"; while modern Christian ethics would rather encourage complexity of mental life, because the intellect as well as the body is an integral part of man and an equal gift of God.

Before concluding, we may turn aside for a moment to notice that other aspect of Knowledge, in which it appears, not so much as an object which we ought to strive to attain, but as itself the basis of all virtue,—telling us *what* we ought to strive to attain. Professor Harnack (*Expansion of Christianity*, p. 141) points out that the Christians "were not yet entirely emancipated from the Socratic fallacy that the man of *Knowledge* will inevitably be a *good* man." And to some extent the ordinary attitude towards heresy may be cited in favour of his opinion.[1] But on the whole the Christian

[1] See Ignatius, *passim*; Theoph. ad Autol. ii. 14. *αἱ διδασκαλίαι τῆς πλάνης, λέγω δὲ τῶν αἱρέσεων, αἱ ἐξαπολλύουσι τοὺς προσίοντας αὐταῖς. Cf.* Polyc. vii. *ὃς ἂν μεθοδεύῃ τὰ λόγια τοῦ Κυρίου πρὸς τὰς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας, καὶ λέγῃ μήτε ἀνάστασιν μήτε κρίσιν, οὗτος πρωτότοκός ἐστι τοῦ Σατανᾶ.*

knowledge is something apart, which can hardly be placed alongside the sort of knowledge upon which philosophers insist. It is rather a new power of perception that comes as the consequence of the new and fuller Life, or rather is one of the chief aspects of that Life. Stoicism, on the other hand, had adopted the Socratic paradox without qualification, and Marcus Aurelius accepts it as part of his philosophic creed. And this largely accounts for the comparative complacency of his moral endeavours as contrasted with the recurrent sense of abasement and remorse that is characteristic of Christianity.

CHAPTER V

DETERMINISM AND FREE WILL—RESPONSIBILITY, MERIT, AND REWARD—THE ULTIMATE AIM OF VIRTUE

The views of Marcus Aurelius with regard to the freedom of the will have already been, to some extent, indicated in quotations. For the world at large he adopts usually a strong determinist position,[1] in order to account for and excuse the various aberrations of mankind from the path of right reason.[2] Moral evil is frequently described as the result of

[1] That such things should proceed from such people is inevitable ; he who would not have it so, would have the fig-tree to yield no juice." *ταῦτα οὕτως ὑπὸ τῶν τοιούτων πέφυκε γίνεσθαι, ἐξ ἀνάγκης· ὁ δὲ τοῦτο μὴ θέλων, θέλει τὴν συκῆν ὀπὸν μὴ ἔχειν.* iv. 6.

[2] " Seeing this you will pity him and neither wonder nor be wroth with him." *τοῦτο γὰρ ἰδὼν ἐλεήσεις αὐτὸν, καὶ οὔτε θαυμάσεις, οὔτε ὀργισθήσῃ.* vii. 26.

ignorance,[1] and therefore not to be visited with unnecessary condemnation. But no such argument, nor anything comparable with it, is ever applied in his exhortations to himself. He is himself emphatically a child of freedom, for whose shortcomings no excuse is conceivable.[2]

An attempt to explain this inconsistent attitude has already been made in regard to an allied, though slightly different, question (chap. iii., pp. 53, 54). It would seem to be Marcus' aim, when he wishes to strengthen his own virtue-loving impulses, to see only the subjective side of all actions; but when he wishes to school himself to patience with regard

[1] *Cf.* "They do wrong through ignorance and unintentionally." *δι' ἄγνοιαν καὶ ἄκοντες ἁμαρτάνουσι.* vii. 22. "Every soul, as they say, is deprived of truth against its will." *πᾶσα ψυχή, φησίν, ἄκουσα στέρεται ἀληθείας.* vii. 63. *Cf.* iv. 3, &c. By a curious inconsistency he reverses the argument in ix. 1. "For he had received from Nature impulses through the neglect of which he is not able now to distinguish falsehood from truth." *ἀφορμὰς γὰρ προειλήφει παρὰ τῆς φύσεως, ὧν ἀμελήσας οὐχ οἷός τέ ἐστι, νῦν διακρίνειν τὰ ψευδῆ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀληθῶν.* ix. 1.

[2] "It is in my power never to act contrary to my god and daemon." *ἔξεστί μοι μηδὲν πράσσειν παρὰ τὸν ἐμὸν θεὸν καὶ δαίμονα.* v. 10.

to others, he will look at the same actions only from their objective side, in order that he may find reasons for condoning their follies. Sir Frederick Pollock sees in him only "an uncompromising determinist."[1] But the truth is that he belongs neither to the determinist nor to the opposing camp. He is a simple seeker after virtue, who will take either position in turn, according as either will best help him on his way at each particular juncture.

Yet, child of freedom though he insists that he is,[2] even in his own case he keeps himself as firmly as he can from considering questions of merit or desert. His pursuit of virtue is like the artist's pursuit of perfection—with patient consideration of every shortcoming, but with nothing akin to remorse in looking back at failure. The recurrent consciousness of deficiency which crushes the

[1] Article in *Mind*, 1879.

[2] *τὸ ἡγεμονικόν ἐστι τὸ ἑαυτὸ ἐγεῖρον καὶ τρέπον, καὶ ποιοῦν μὲν ἑαυτό, οἷον ἂν καὶ θέλῃ.* vi. 8. *οὔτ' οὖν ἐλεύθερος ἔσῃ, οὔτε αὐτάρκης, οὔτε ἀπαθής.* vi. 16. *ἡ τοῦ φύλλου φύσις μέρος ἐστὶ φύσεως . . . ἐμποδίζεσθαι δυναμένης, ἡ δὲ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου . . . ἀνεμποδίστου φύσεως.* viii. 7.

sensitive Christian with a sense of unworthiness that falls little short of begetting complete despair, is unknown to this simple truth-seeker, who resolves to amend each error as he becomes aware of it, in the same spirit as the worker, to whom some technical failing is pointed out, quietly proceeds, as a matter of course, to correct what is amiss.[1] "Be not disgusted" (he writes) "nor discouraged, nor dissatisfied, if the attempt to do everything according to right principles does not prosper with thee; but when thou hast been thrust back, return to it again and be content if the greater part is fairly worthy of a man, and love this to which thou returnest; and do not go back to philosophy as to a master, but as those who, being afflicted with sore eyes, have recourse to the sponge and the egg"

[1] This is well stated by Constant Martha. "Ce n'est pas un spectacle sans intérêt et sans nouveauté que celui d'un païen si amoureux de perfection intérieure qui . . . . . travaille à son âme avec une tendre sollicitude, comme un artiste qui voudrait accomplir un chef-d'œuvre, et qui naïvement, sans vanité, pour se satisfaire lui-même, retouche sans cesse son ouvrage."—*Les Moralistes sous l'Empire romain*, p. 197.

(v. 9).[1] There is to him no sense of terror or mystery in his struggle with moral failings; nor has he ever any doubts as to the inherent rightness and reasonableness of the universe in which he labours, serenely confident that all things must work together for all those that love righteousness. "Know well that if it ought to have been otherwise the gods would have made it so. For if it were just it would have been possible; and if it had been in accordance with Nature, Nature would have brought it to pass," (xii. 5.[2])

The consciousness of alienation from God which forms a large part of the inheritance of the Christian conscience from Judaism, is unknown to Marcus Aurelius; who, in spite of his world-weariness, does to this extent at least share in the youthful unconsciousness

[1] *μὴ σικχαίνειν, μηδὲ ἀπαυδᾶν, μηδὲ ἀποδυσπετεῖν, εἰ μὴ καταπυκνοῦταί σοι τὸ ἀπὸ δογμάτων ὀρθῶν ἕκαστα πράσσειν. ἀλλὰ ἐκκρουσθέντα, πάλιν ἐπανιέναι, καὶ ἀσμενίζειν, εἰ τὰ πλείω ἀνθρωπικώτερα, καὶ φιλεῖν τοῦτο, ἐφ' ὃ ἐπανέρχῃ· καὶ μὴ ὡς πρὸς παιδαγωγὸν τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ἐπανιέναι· ἀλλ' ὡς οἱ ὀφθαλμιῶντες πρὸς τὸ σπογγάριον καὶ τὸ ὠόν. . . .*

[2] *εὖ ἴσθι, ὅτι, εἰ ὡς ἑτέρως ἔχειν ἔδει, ἐποίησαν ἄν. εἰ γὰρ δίκαιον ἦν, ἦν ἂν καὶ δυνατόν, καὶ εἰ κατὰ φύσιν, ἤνεγκεν ἂν αὐτὸ ἡ φύσις.* xii. 5.

of Hellenic thought, that he is quite uninfluenced by any conception of a necessity for redemption and atonement. The "natural" is that which is reasonable and right. And so an anxious attitude with regard to sin and repentance appears to him as a sort of impiety. "A branch cut off from the adjoining branch cannot but be cut off from the whole tree. Thus also a man sundered [by hatred] from any single man has fallen apart from the whole of society. Moreover, it is another that cuts off a branch; but man himself detaches himself from his neighbour, by hatred and aversion, and does not realise that simultaneously he has cut himself off from the whole community. But this is the gift of Zeus when he adjusted together the [human] commonwealth; namely, that it is possible for us once more to grow together with the adjoining branch, and again complete the symmetry of the whole" (xi. 8.)[1]

1 κλάδος τοῦ προσεχοῦς κλάδου ἀποκοπεὶς οὐ δύναται μὴ καὶ τοῦ ὅλου φυτοῦ ἀποκεκόφθαι. οὕτω δὴ καὶ ἄνθρωπος ἑνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἀποσχισθεὶς ὅλης τῆς κοινωνίας ἀποπέπτωκε. κλάδον μὲν οὖν ἄλλος ἀποκόπτει· ἄνθρωπος δὲ αὐτὸς ἑαυτὸν τοῦ πλησίον χωρίζει, μισήσας καὶ ἀποστραφείς· ἀγνοεῖ δὲ ὅτι καὶ τοῦ ὅλου

Accordingly, "a broken and a contrite heart" would be to him evidence of a lack of faith in the eternal rightness of the world—something far from admirable. It would be a rejection, or at least imply a hesitation in acceptance, of this special gift of the co-ordinating Spirit of all. Thus he eliminates anything that he has discovered to be a blemish, with a confidently simple turning away from evil that is very different from the anxious response of more timid souls to the commands of an alien superior; or even the reluctant acceptance by a philosophic pupil of a theory he would fain reject.

The mechanical views of Hermas with regard to repentance and punishment (to take one who stands at the opposite pole of thought on these points) could only be to Marcus Aurelius repulsive conceptions. Hermas is afflicted with recurrent anxiety as to his moral progress; but his anxiety is rather that of one

πολιτεύματος ἅμα ἀποτέτμηκεν ἑαυτόν. πλὴν ἐκεῖνό γε δῶρον τοῦ συστησαμένου τὴν κοινωνίαν Διός· ἔξεστι γὰρ πάλιν ἡμῖν συμφῦναι τῷ προσεχεῖ, καὶ πάλιν τοῦ ὅλου συμπληρωτικοῖς γενέσθαι (xi. 8). *Cf.* τοῦτο ἄλλῳ μέρει οὐδενὶ θεὸς ἐπέτρεψεν, χωρισθέντι καὶ διακοπέντι πάλιν συνελθεῖν (viii. 34).

who wishes to fulfil to the letter the definite commands of a personal God; and not only can he take credit to himself for the moral qualities[1] that he has already conquered, but he even feels no incongruity in the thought of performing works of supererogation.[2] These particular examples of pharisaistic thought are not mentioned as being typical of contemporary Christianity (though they are certainly typical of Hermas); but because the mere possibility of their appearance clearly indicates the presence of that legal strain in Christian thought which makes of duty a composite of divine commands, rather than an application of broad principles intuitively evident to the reason of humanity, which is felt to be akin to the controlling Reason that makes the world what it is; a view of duty which sees its accomplishment in the satisfaction of a higher Power

[1] ". . . . . especially the continent Hermas, who abstains from all desire, and is full of all simplicity and of great innocence." (Vis. i. 2.)

[2] "Keep the commandments of the Lord and thou wilt be esteemed and be enrolled in the number of them that keep the commandments. But if thou do any good thing beyond the commandment of God thou shalt win for thyself more exceeding glory." (Sim. v. 3.)

rather than in the satisfaction of the omnipresent reason in which humanity shares. As an extreme instance of this crude conception, of duties authoritatively imposed and of rewards mechanically attached to them, we may take the statements as to almsgiving, which the pseudo-Clement describes as a lightener of sin and a sort of repentance,[1] while Hermas treats it as a bare unqualified command emanating from God, the giver not being expected to consider consequences, and indeed being guiltless (ἀθῳός) with respect to them (Mand. ii.).

That the Christian writers emphasised the ideas of merit and responsibility as integral parts of their teleological scheme, needs no illustration. The tendency is curiously combined, however, with a demonology which personifies temptations as conscious evil beings matched in deadly conflict with suffering humanity (a theory which one would *à priori* expect to weaken the sense of responsibility). In a way this demonology is evidence of the awakened conscience of mankind, resulting as

[1] ὡς μετάνοια ἁμαρτίας—κούφισμα ἁμαρτίας (2 Clem. 16).

it does from the new-found horror of sin which gives to various forms of offences an intensely real objective existence.[1] One consequence, however, of this mode of viewing the world was that it led to a preoccupation with various sins even more than with the corresponding virtues, as outstanding positive entities, and distracted the attention to no slight degree from the contemplation of the Higher,[2] by striving towards which we develop.[3]

The sense of responsibility for sin and the belief in rewards and punishments being adjusted to desert, naturally involves an emphatic dwelling on the freedom of the human will as its justification. "Neither did He

[1] "In the belief in demons, as that belief dominated the Christian world in the second and third centuries, it is easy to detect features which stamp it as a reactionary movement hostile to contemporary culture. Yet it must not be forgotten that in the heart of it lay hid a moral and consequently a spiritual advance, viz., in a quickened sense of evil, as in a recognition of the power of sin and of its dominion in the world." (Harnack, *Expansion of Christianity*, vol. i. p. 167.)

[2] Hermas himself becomes aware of this danger. See Vis. iii. 1.

[3] *Cf.* Harnack, *op. cit.* p. 141.

make (man) immortal, nor yet mortal, but, as we have previously stated, capable of either fate; so that if, keeping the commandment of God, he incline towards the things that are eternal, he may receive from Him immortality as his reward, and become a god; but if on the other hand he turn towards the works of death, disobeying God, that he may be the cause of his own death. For God created him free and master of himself"[1] (Theoph. ii. 27). "It is necessary to believe that Jesus Christ is Lord, and to believe all the truth concerning His deity and humanity, also to believe in the Holy Spirit, and that as free agents[2] we are punished for our sins and honoured for our good actions." (Hermas, Mand. i.) Similar passages will be found in the other early writings.[3] The chief noteworthy difference

[1] *ἐλεύθερον γὰρ καὶ αὐτεξούσιον ἐποίησεν ὁ Θεὸς ἄνθρωπον.*

[2] *αὐτεξούσιοι.*

[3] *Cf.* Tatian xi. *ἀπώλεσεν ἡμᾶς τὸ αὐτεξούσιον.* Justin, Tryph. cii.—*ἀλλ' ὡς ἐγίνωσκε καλὸν εἶναι γενέσθαι, ἐποίησεν αὐτεξουσίους πρὸς δικαιοπραξίαν καὶ ἀγγέλους καὶ ἀνθρώπους καὶ χρόνους ὥρισε μέχρις οὗ ἐγίνωσκε καλὸν εἶναι τὸ αὐτεξούσιον ἔχειν αὐτούς.* Apol. i. 43—*καὶ αὖ εἰ μὴ προαιρέσει ἐλευθέρᾳ πρὸς τὸ φεύγειν τὰ αἰσχρὰ καὶ αἱρεῖσθαι τὰ καλὰ δύναμιν ἔχει τὸ ἀνθρώπειον γένος, ἀναίτιόν ἐστι τῶν ὁπωσδήποτε πραττομένων.*

between the attitude of Marcus Aurelius and that of the Christians is, that the latter apply the doctrine with a view to evoking the moral sense in others; while Marcus Aurelius uses it as an incentive to personal morality for himself alone, inconsistently accepting at the same time the contrary view for the rest of humanity—finding in the conception that all men are bound in the chains of causality, compelled to act as they do in the same way that horses must neigh[1] and children wail, a means of avoiding the passing of condemnatory judgments upon them, and of escaping the mental perturbations consequent on disappointments as to their actions.

The teaching of Marcus is throughout intensely practical, in the sense that it is all intended to bear directly on the conduct of life, though never "practical" in the sense of discussing the conduct of life from any utilitarian standpoint. It is to this very practicality that the incompleteness and theo-

ἀλλ' ὅτι ἐλευθέρᾳ προαιρέσει καὶ κατορθοῖ καὶ σφάλλεται οὕτως ἀποδείκνυμεν. Athenag., Sup. xxiv. αὐθαίρετον καὶ τὴν ἀρετὴν καὶ τὴν κακίαν ἐχόντων.

[1] xii. 16.

retical unsatisfactoriness of the *Meditations* is chiefly due. Examined as a statement of a reasoned system of ethics it is seldom found to bear close analysis, though the various parts of it are inextricably interwoven in such a manner as to show unmistakably that it is a system that has been *lived*. But Marcus is seeking, not so much theoretical completeness, as convenient, adaptable maxims such as the sagacious pursuer of virtue will do well to have ever "ready to hand" as safeguards against unworthy thoughts and actions. "Just as physicians have ever their instruments and scalpels ready to hand with a view to the unanticipated needs of medical practice, so do thou keep ready the maxims as regards knowing what is fitting towards men and God" (iii. 13).[1]

He does not turn aside to examine carefully the theoretical bases of morality or attempt to justify virtue by any reference to its effects in any sphere outside its own. Virtue, for

[1] *Cf.* iv. 12. "Two forms of preparedness are always necessary." *δύο ταύτας ἑτοιμότητας ἔχειν ἀεὶ δεῖ. Cf.* iv. 50. *ἰδιωτικὸν μέν, ὅμως δὲ ἀνυστικὸν βοήθημα πρὸς θανάτου καταφρόνησιν. Cf.* iv. 3, and the frequent use of the word *πρόχειρον*, v. 1, &c.

him, needs no external buttressing, beyond the reiterated assertion that it alone is reasonable and natural. It is its own motive, its own end, its own reward. For him, to say that virtue is virtuous is sufficient. All other thought is irrelevant. Even permanence—"the wages of going on and not to die"—is as much an alien consideration as the relation of morality to pleasant results of any kind outside its own region. Indeed, so little does he feel that right-doing needs any extrinsic attraction, that it seems to him less necessary to justify it by identifying virtuous activity with happiness than happiness by showing that it may be virtuous. The thought that "nothing is either good or bad which can happen indifferently to the good man and the bad" (iv. 39)[1] is a sentiment that frequently recurs.[2] "How many pleasures" (he writes,

[1] *μήτε κακόν τι εἶναι μήτε ἀγαθόν, ὃ ἐπίσης δύναται κακῷ ἀνδρὶ καὶ ἀγαθῷ συμβαίνειν.*

[2] With this we may effectively contrast the Christian inference from the same observed facts of experience (that God sendeth His rain upon the just and the unjust)—that because the Father careth for the sparrows He must care for us much more.

vi. 34), "have been enjoyed by robbers, parricides, tyrants!"[1]—as if the fact, that a particular class of enjoyment could fall to an evil character, made it in itself not worth having.

Such an attitude is to the ordinary moralist almost inconceivable, and those who adopt it are generally held guilty either of affectation or self-deception. There is no doubt, however, that in Marcus it is the habitual attitude and not one assumed "as at the bidding of a pædagogue" (v. 9). Long loving study of the characteristics of virtue has swamped out of existence all consideration of consequences, as matters unrelated and alien. Much as the miser, who in the beginning may have sought money for some definite end, comes at last to give himself over to money-getting in complete forgetfulness of the purposes which money serves, so Marcus becomes an uncompromising pursuer of virtue for virtue's sake. That virtue is always "worth while" is to him so much an axiom that he finds it

[1] *ἡλίκας ἡδονὰς ἥσθησαν λησταί, κίναιδοι, πατραλοῖαι, τύραννοι!* vi. 34.

unnecessary even to state it; or at most, attempts to prove it by means of the most delightfully unconvincing tautologies. "He who does wrong does wrong against himself. He who acts unjustly acts unjustly to himself, because he makes himself bad" (ix. 4).[1] It is foolish, in short, to be bad, because the result is—that you are bad. If the reasoning were disputed it would be promptly restated in slightly changed form, with a "because" or a "therefore" to link the axiom with its previous enunciation.

From beginning to end he assumes that virtue is always its own reward, and that that reward is always adequate. Even if the universe were a fortuitous concourse of atoms it would still be reasonable to go straight forward. "And as to the world, if there be a God, all is well,—but if all be at random, act not at random thou" (ix. 28).[2] But the Christian writers not only do not speak in this spirit; they even at times deny its reasonableness. "For"

[1] *ὁ ἁμαρτάνων ἑαυτῷ ἁμαρτάνει· ὁ ἀδικῶν, ἑαυτὸν ἀδικεῖ, κακὸν ἑαυτὸν ποιῶν.* ix. 4.

[2] *τὸ δὲ ὅλον, εἴτε Θεός, εὖ ἔχει πάντα· εἴτε τὸ εἰκῇ, μὴ καὶ σὺ εἰκῇ.*

(writes Athenagoras) "if no judgment whatever were to be passed on the actions of men, men would have no advantage over the irrational creatures, but rather would fare worse than these do, inasmuch as they keep in subjection their passions, and concern themselves about piety, righteousness, and the other virtues; and a life after the manner of brutes would be best, virtue would be absurd. . . ."[1]

The Christian attitude is perhaps put most distinctly in the ancient homily formerly ascribed to Clement. Virtue, for this unknown author, neither is, nor brings its own reward. The wages of righteousness must be attached thereto by an external power (even as the content of righteousness is formulated by this same external authority), yet if the reward were obvious and immediate, virtue would not be virtue, but mere huckstering (2 Clem. xx.).

[1] *εἰ μὲν γὰρ μηδεμία μηδαμοῦ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις πεπραγμένων γίνοιτο κρίσις, οὐδὲν ἔξουσι πλεῖον τῶν ἀλόγων ἄνθρωποι· μᾶλλον δὲ κἀκείνων πράξουσιν ἀθλιώτερον, οἳ τὰ πάθη δουλαγωγοῦντες καὶ φροντίζοντες εὐσεβείας καὶ δικαισύνης ἢ τῆς ἄλλης ἀρετῆς, ὁ δὲ κτηνώδης βίος ἄριστος, ἀρετὴ δὲ ἀνόητος . . .* de Resurr. 19. *Cf. ibid.* 15. *μάταιος δὲ ὁ νοῦς, ματαία δὲ φρόνησις καὶ δικαιοσύνης παρατήρησις, ἣ καὶ πάσης ἀρετῆς ἄσκησις.*

God, however, is good, and the virtuous must be ultimately rewarded. Our part is to have faith in the certainty of the recompense. To doubt it (*μικρὰ ἐλπίζειν*)[1] is to doubt the goodness of God. To ask for another arrangement by which the long-suffering and the faith may be dispensed with, is to ask for what is incongruous, if not self-contradictory.[2]

The spiritual plane of Hermas and the pseudo-Clement is certainly not as exalted as that of the other exponents of Christian ethics with whom we deal; but similar views of the essential connection of virtue with reward, and of that reward being more or less mechanically superimposed from without, are to be found in all. "Have Him in your heart" (writes Hermas, Sim. i.), "perform His works, mindful of His commandments and of the promises

[1] 2 Clem. i.

[2] *πιστεύωμεν οὖν ἀδελφοὶ καὶ ἀδελφαί. Θεοῦ ζῶντος πεῖραν ἀθλοῦμεν, καὶ γυμναζόμεθα τῷ νῦν βίῳ ἵνα τῷ μέλλοντι στεφανωθῶμεν. οὐδεὶς τῶν δικαίων ταχὺν καρπὸν ἔλαβεν, ἀλλ' ἐκδέχεται αὐτόν. εἰ γὰρ τὸν μισθὸν τῶν δικαίων ὁ Θεὸς συντόμως ἀπεδίδου, εὐθέως ἐμπορίαν ἠσκοῦμεν καὶ οὐ θεοσέβειαν. ἐδοκοῦμεν γὰρ εἶναι δίκαιοι, οὐ τὸ εὐσεβὲς ἀλλὰ τὸ κερδαλέον διώκοντες. καὶ διὰ τοῦτο θεία κρίσις ἔβλαψεν πνεῦμα μὴ ὂν δίκαιον, καὶ ἐβάρυνεν δεσμοῖς.* 2 Clem. xx.

He has made, in the faith that He will perform the latter if the former be observed."[1] "For neither do the good in the present life obtain the rewards of virtue, nor yet do the bad receive the wages of vice" (Athenag., Resurr. 19).[2] "And we exercise ourselves in this present life, in order that we may be crowned in the life to come" (2 Clem. 20).[3]

In this connection also we feel the effects of the contrasted modes of viewing the universe —the Christian view of it as a world governed by a personal Will which imposes *Commandments*, and the Stoic conception of it as controlled and permeated by impersonal Reason acting according to *Laws* (in the scientific sense of orderly sequences). The Christian, believing in the presence and activity of the personal Governor who punishes and rewards,

[1] *Cf.* Hermas, Vis. 5.

[2] *οὔτε γὰρ οἱ σπουδαῖοι κατὰ τὴν παροῦσαν ζωὴν φέρονται τὰ τῆς ἀρετῆς ἐπίχειρα, οὔτε μὴν οἱ φαῦλοι τὰ τῆς κακίας.*

[3] *καὶ γυμναζόμεθα τῷ νῦν βίῳ ἵνα τῷ μέλλοντι στεφανωθῶμεν.* *Cf.* I Clem. 35. Notice also the frequent references to recompense in the next world (*μισθός* and *ἀντιμισθία*) for things foregone in this; *e.g.*, Barnabas xix; *cf.* Ignat. ad Pol. vi. *ἀρέσκετε ᾧ στρατεύεσθε, ἀφ' οὗ καὶ τὰ ὀψώνια κομίσεσθε.*

and wishing to obtain both virtue and the ultimate reward of virtue (both advantages being covered by the phrases relating to salvation), is liable to have his attention distracted from the contemplation of morality to its future consequences. Even if originally attracted by goodness itself, he is impelled to become, to some extent, the huckster which the pseudo-Clement declares he would be, if rewards followed good actions immediately.

No doubt every individual is influenced in different degrees by these complex considerations, and what is a practical aid to the one becomes a hindrance to the other. And so Marcus Aurelius' dicta, though framed solely with a view to controlling practice, would be declared, doubtless, by the stolid majority of mankind, who feel with less force than he, the attraction and the glory of sheer moral excellence pursued for itself alone, to be the impracticable folly of a saintly dreamer.

CHAPTER VI

RELIGION AND ETHICS—CHRISTIANITY AS A NEW LIFE—CONCLUSION

So far we have endeavoured to treat of Christian Ethics as something which can be detached from the Christian religion and separately analysed. But Christianity is much more than a philosophic framework for the conduct of life. It is not a system put together synthetically from a selection of concepts and syllogisms, but the vision of a fuller life, based upon what is *perceived* of a personality deemed divine. An Ideal Personality is not something that can be analysed. Nor is Life, in its lowest manifestations, within the range of philosophic explanations. It *is*. And it is enough for us to recognise it when it is manifested. Christianity *is*, and we may accept or reject, admire or despise, but the name stands for a force that

baffles explanation, even as the "flower in the crannied wall" remains a mystery after the scientist has done his best. Pluck the flower, and place its delicate veins under the microscope, and it is no longer the same flower, but a dead thing. And if in similar fashion we attempt to scrutinise the Ethics of Christianity in detachment from the living inexplicable manifestations of its vitality, we are attempting to place Life under the scalpel, confounding knowledge of the skeleton with knowledge of the living creature.

To a considerable extent the early apologists fell into this error of setting Christianity in juxtaposition with philosophical systems, and by so doing it must be admitted that they weakened their cause.[1]

[1] "This, however," (says Harnack, *Expansion of Christianity*, vol. i. p. 320), "is one form of its self-consciousness which must not be overrated, for it is almost exclusively confined to the Christian apologetic and polemic. Christians never doubted, indeed, that their doctrine was really the truth, and, therefore, the true philosophy. But then it was infinitely more than a philosophy." Still, as he points out elsewhere (p. 295), "as these discussions were carried on in a purely rational spirit, and as there was a frankly avowed partiality for the idea

On the other hand it might be urged, though only by the superficial observer, that the centering of one's hopes and faith in moral advance in the person of the Ideal Man, who is also for Christianity an Historic Man, would tend to make Christian Ethics, set over against Stoic Ethics, appear too greatly a matter of discipleship, too little a question of inward evolution. For merely to obey, without understanding, means, in the matter of moral growth (it may be argued), to acquire little besides psychological and physiological habits which may be indeed a useful basis for further development, but in themselves are of little worth—tending indeed in many cases to a hard narrowness of judgment of others. But none the less, though "man is the noble endogenous plant which grows, like the palm, from within outward," the growth is more rapidly elicited by a clearly conceived external ideal than by aught else—even as the tree is for ever induced

that Christianity was a transparently rational system, vital Christian truths were either abandoned or at any rate neglected. Christians thus became impoverished, and the Christian faith was seriously diluted." *Cf.* also Rainy, *Ancient Catholic Church*, pp. 90–91.)

to struggle upward and turn this way and that by the attraction of the light towards which it strives. Marcus Aurelius has realised it, when, to find support for his endeavours, he sets down for his own benefit the good qualities of this and that man whom he has known and admired. He does not add, "Become ye imitators" as Ignatius might,[1] but the thought is inevitably there.

There is something infinitely attractive in the opening to his self-instructions,—that gallery of personal portraits which he elaborates so lovingly in order to carry them with him in his Marcomannic campaign. Having at his side these concrete representations of virtue, sanctified by personal affection, he feels himself the stronger for confronting those less tangible foes whom he feels to be much more real and important than any Marcomanni. Into a narrow compass he gathers the fairest illustrations that he knows, of what is honourable and pure and lovely and of good report, in order that he may think on these things. Had he intended his little volume for the eyes of the

[1] *Cf.* Phil. vii. *μιμηταὶ γίνεσθε.*

world he could have chosen no better way to take our affections by storm at the outset. The *naïveté* of the careful catalogue shows us the writer's heart of hearts almost at a glance. By knowing what he loves and honours, we know *him*.

Yet nowhere, perhaps, shall we find a happier illustration of the great advantage of which Christianity is possessed, considered as a vital conquering force, in being derived from the comprehension of a Person, and not of a series of concepts, than when we re-read the first few paragraphs of the *Meditations*. "From my grandfather: knowledge of what is meant by imperturbability. From my father, this. From my tutor, that." There is something almost pathetically effortful in the enumeration. How different in its comprehensiveness is the Christian's attitude towards Christ! The one elaborates, with difficulty, his perfect man out of many men; the other turns with absolute simplicity to a concrete ideal. The one attains his type by concentrated effort; the other sees his exemplar[1] always before him,

[1] The conscious imitation of Christ, however, is by no

with no uncertain outlines, fixed and unchangeable, without rival or equal. Marcus Aurelius consciously copies, while the Christian is

means so prominent in the exhortations of early Christianity as of its modern developments. Harnack goes so far as to say that "in the early Church the imitation of Christ never became a formal principle of ethics (to use a modern phrase) except for the virtuoso in religion, the ecclesiastic, the teacher, the ascetic or the martyr; it played quite a subordinate part in the ethical teaching of the Church. . . . . Foreone thing, Christology stood in the way, involving not imitation but obedience; for another thing, the actual details of imitation seemed too severe" (*op. cit.* p. 107. *Cf.* Weinel's *St Paul*, chap. xxi.). But against this view it is possible to quote numerous passages, *e.g.*, Ign. Eph. x., "Let us hasten to be imitators of the Lord, which of us may be the more wronged, which the more impoverished, which the more set at nought; in order that no weed of the Devil may be found among you." (*μιμηταὶ δὲ τοῦ Κυρίου σπουδάζωμεν εἶναι, τις πλέον ἀδικηθῇ, τίς ἀποστερηθῇ, τίς ἀθετηθῇ· ἵνα μὴ τοῦ διαβόλου βοτάνη τις εὑρεθῇ ἐν ὑμῖν.*) 1 Clem. xvi. "See, beloved, what an exemplar is this which is being offered to us; for if the Lord was thus lowly-minded, what are we to do who come through Him under the yoke of grace?" (*ὁρᾶτε, ἄνδρες ἀγαπητοί, τίς ὁ ὑπογραμμὸς ὁ δεδομένος ἡμῖν.*) Polyc. x., "Following the example of the Lord." (*τῷ ὑποδείγματι τοῦ Κυρίου ἀκολουθοῦντες.*) Polyc. viii. "For he set us this example, through himself." *τοῦτον γὰρ ἡμῖν τὸν ὑπογραμμὸν ἔθηκε δι' ἑαυτοῦ, cf. μιμηταὶ οὖν γενώμεθα τῆς ὑπομονῆς αὐτοῦ.* Polyc. viii.

spiritually absorbed into, his ideal. The latter, beginning on a lower plane, may display at first a poorer conception of the moral ideal than the disciplined thinker; but his advantage is great, and he is likely to travel further.

But how far had this primitive group of writers realised the new conception of Life and its immense significance? Undoubtedly they tended to ascribe to Christian Ethics a "qualitative distinctness" from pagan ethics, and felt that its natural accompaniments were Joy and Cheerfulness as well as Long-Suffering and Patience. But it is necessary to remember also that to their mind "the Present and the Future were sharply opposed to each other, and it was this opposition which furnished the principle of self-control with its most powerful motive. It became, indeed, with many people a sort of glowing passion."[1] They realised only dimly that the Kingdom of Heaven should be within them, and turned with some effort from the things of this world, not as worthless in themselves, but as inferior and perishable, and a hindrance to obtaining the

[1] Harnack, *op. cit.* p. 117

greater and imperishable joys of a world to come. "It is better to hate the things of this world because they are slight and short-lived and perishable; and to desire those others which are good and imperishable" (Pseudo-Clem. 6).[1] "If we ignore His commands nothing will save us from the everlasting punishment" (*Ibid.* 6).[2] "They know not how great torture the enjoyment of this world brings, and how much delight (*τρυφή*) attends the gospel that is to be (*Ibid.* 10). "Let us hate the wandering of the present time that we may be welcomed into the future" (Barnabas, iv.).[3] Harnack therefore appears to overstate somewhat their spirituality when he says that "in their preaching the future became already present, while hard and fast recompense seemed to disappear entirely."[4] The fear and the hope that attached themselves

[1] *βέλτιόν ἐστιν τὰ ἐνθάδε μισῆσαι, ὅτι μικρὰ καὶ ὀλιγοχρόνια καὶ φθαρτά· ἐκεῖνα δὲ ἀγαπῆσαι, τὰ ἀγαθὰ καὶ ἄφθαρτα.*

[2] *οὐδὲν ἡμᾶς ῥύσεται ἐκ τῆς αἰωνίου κολάσεως ἐὰν παρακούσωμεν τῶν ἐντολῶν αὐτοῦ.*

[3] *μισήσωμεν τὴν πλάνην τοῦ νῦν καιροῦ, ἵνα εἰς τὸν μέλλοντα ἀγαπηθῶμεν.*

[4] *Expansion of Christianity*, vol. i. p. 119

to the belief in a future life were among the strongest incentives to the pursuit of righteousness, and the frequent references to the strength of such feelings as covetousness (*φιλαργυρία* and *πλεονεξία* which are combated by similar "other-worldly" prudential considerations are worthy note. In Marcus Aurelius one is struck by the reverse conception—not, "do righteousness because the soul is immortal and rewards and punishments attend the future life," but, "work, for the night cometh when no man can work: life is short, and the grave is the end of all."[1]

But references to Joy, Hope, Gladness, Cheerfulness, ring through all their pages. For the word "Faith" itself there might

[1] *Cf.* ii. 4. "The limit of your time is circumscribed for you. If you do not use it to attain the ethereal calm it will be gone, and you will be gone, and it will not be here again." (*ὅρος ἐστί σοι περιγεγραμμένος τοῦ χρόνου ᾧ ἐὰν εἰς τὸ ἀπαιθριάσαι μὴ χρήσῃ, οἰχήσεται, καὶ οἰχήσῃ, καὶ αὖθις οὐχ ἥξεται*). *Cf.* iv. 26. *βραχὺς ὁ βίος· κερδαντέον τὸ πάρον σὺν εὐλογιστίᾳ καὶ δίκῃ.* Even death itself is to Marcus Aurelius one of the actions (*πράξεις*) of life, which must be done nobly and worthily, for its own sake, as it were. *Cf.* x. 8; vi. 2. (*μία γὰρ τῶν βιωτικῶν πράξεων καὶ αὕτη ἐστί, καθ' ἣν ἀποθνήσκομεν*).

almost at times be substituted such phrases as "driving force" or "spiritual energy." Hope, we have already pointed out, was in their eyes a duty. Optimism was essential to the propagation of their creed — an optimism which especially connects itself with the belief in the potential equality of all mankind,—that as all were made in the image of God, all might eventually attain to a full measure of God-like sanctity. This assertion of the fundamental equality of all (equality in the eyes of God, Who sees us as we shall be, not as we are)[1] is one of the Christian postulates most opposed to the fundamental beliefs of Marcus Aurelius, whose contempt for the average man can be illustrated by a score of quotations.[2] The Christian must despise no one.[3] He must rather expect to find the most glorious

[1] "The Church never sanctioned the thesis that there was a qualitative distinction of human beings according to their moral capacities, and that in consequence of this there must also be different grades in their ethical conduct and in the morality which might be expected from them" (Harnack, *op. cit.* p. 271).

[2] iv. 48, 50; v. 10; vi. 27; vii. 62, 70; viii. 44, 53; ix. 18, 27; x. 19, &c.

[3] *μηδενὸς καταφρονοῦντες.* Polyc. x.

examples[1] of the power of the new religion in the regeneration of the very lowest.

Christianity brought life that men might have it more abundantly. It did not come to add an element of needless sadness to the world—as they who compare with its literature the light-hearted gaiety of a much earlier paganism are sometimes led to declare—but to bring joy and gladness. It was not a negative thing adding to the list of prohibited sides of human activity, but a positive force heightening and brightening the possibilities of life.[2] It gave at least a partial answer to the questions about sin and suffering which a morally diseased world was asking; and though it answered also many questions which the world had not yet learned to ask, and thus supplied material for much temporary misunderstanding—for though we needs must love the highest when

[1] *Cf.* Ign. ad Polyc. II. "If thou lovest to have excellent pupils, it is no credit to thee. Rather govern the baser in gentleness." (*καλοὺς μαθητὰς ἐὰν φιλῇς, χάρις σοι οὐκ ἔστιν· μᾶλλον τοὺς λοιμοτέρους ἐν πραΰτητι ὑπότασσε.*)

[2] Hermas becomes to some extent aware of this truth and enforces it on himself. "Cease, Hermas, from perpetual petitioning concerning sins. Ask also concerning righteousness." (Vis. iii. 1.)

we see it, it is equally true that we cannot *see* the higher until our love has made us ready to accept it—it did not thereby lose in permanent value. By its ultimate, if sometimes tardy, rejection of all extremes and all one-sidedness; neither subordinating overmuch (like the earlier Græco-Roman ethics) the individual to the community; nor yet (like Marcus Aurelius) endeavouring to establish him on a pedestal of impossible independence; not asserting, with the Gnostics, the essential evil of matter; nor seeking, with Marcus, the annihilation of emotion; denying that man is ever a mere creature of chance and circumstance (such as Marcus declared the vast mass of his fellows to be); while not ignoring differences of actual moral attainment, and the varying force of temptation; and above all insisting on the fundamental equality of all in their equal potentialities of development; by its marvellous catholicity of adaptability, moreover, in absorbing whatever it encounters that it has seen to be good; in its readiness to weigh and examine, its slowness to reject, its tenacity

to retain, historical Christianity has had no difficulty in supplying the modes of thought through which the aspirations of nearly all Western moralists have chosen to express themselves,—even the more independent thinkers generally preferring to subordinate their tendencies towards eccentricity to the cardinal advantage of continuity in progress, allowing themselves to be named Christians when the ties that bound them to contemporary thought were slight.

Unlike their apostolic predecessors, the writers whom we have grouped in contrast with Marcus Aurelius were not markedly in advance of contemporary thought. But they were in the main current of advance, and the future was with them as it never was with him. And thus his elevation of thought, though not barren (moral greatness can never be barren), was not fruitful with the fruitfulness of those who laboured with a consciousness that they were sharing in a universal movement common to all humanity, and who handed on to their successors the task that

they had received from their forerunners, confident that the fruit of their teaching would multiply and increase not merely thirty-fold or sixty-fold or a hundred-fold, but beyond all calculation and all enumeration.

APPENDIX

Marcus Aurelius, the emperor whose reign closes the two centuries of prosperity which precede the long period of decline, was born in 121, at Rome itself, in the reign of the versatile Hadrian. Until his sixteenth year he bore the name of M. Annius Verus. In that year (138) Hadrian, feeling that his end was at hand, adopted Marcus' uncle Antoninus Pius as his successor, on condition that Antoninus should adopt the orphaned Marcus, whose intense earnestness and truthfulness had attracted the aged ruler's attention; and M. Annius was thenceforward known as Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. From Hadrian's death in 138, till that of Antoninus in 161 Marcus was a sort of junior colleague in the empire; and when the supreme power passed to him in his turn he was already in middle age and experienced in administrative duties. He married his cousin Faustina, for whom he had an abiding love. Several children were born to them, but only one grew to manhood,—the son Commodus, who survived his father, and proved

a worthless and incapable successor. Faustina died in 175.

The reign of M. Aurelius was a period of disaster. Wars with the Quadi and Marcomanni on the Danube, an invasion of Syria by the Persians under Vologeses, a revolt of an able general in the East, pestilence, flood, and famine at Rome—these were its most striking features. With no love for pomp and power, and apparently a strong distaste for warfare, the emperor remained with stoic firmness at his post, facing steadily every new evil that arose, and leading in person the Roman legions in successive arduous campaigns. His personal tastes would have taken him to a life of retirement, the quiet pleasures of the farm and of the library. But he was compelled, in a state of protracted ill-health, to drag himself through the performance of imperial duties, from which the death which came to him in 180, while he was conducting a last frontier campaign, was welcomed by him as a release.

It was in the few leisure movements of his last weary years, in the tent, perhaps, or while on the march, that he composed the book of self-communings which accident alone seems to have preserved for us. It was written for himself, entitled apparently, *To Himself*, and seemingly not intended to be published. In addition to this we possess a few of the letters, dealing chiefly with domestic

incidents, which passed between him and his tutor Fronto.

Barnabas. A single epistle of moderate length bearing the title "Epistle of Barnabas," and probably written in the last quarter of the first century, was formerly ascribed to the companion of St. Paul. It is a crude composition allegorising the Old Testament writings from a strongly anti-Judaic standpoint. The author shows much false modesty mingled with spiritual arrogance.

Clement. (1) A fairly lengthy epistle addressed to the Corinthian Church in the name of the Church at Rome, bears the name of Clement, whom tradition declares to have been bishop of Rome about the close of the first century. It was called forth by the existence of bitter controversies, apparently due to private ambitions, which had arisen among the Corinthian Christians. The style is dignified, the moral tone high, while the phraseology echoes that of the New Testament. The author has no marked theological bias.

(2) The so-called second epistle of Clement is an anonymous homily, probably of somewhat later date than the above (between 100 and 150 A.D.). It is a comparatively feeble and commonplace production

from the intellectual point of view, but the author shows considerable moral earnestness.

The Didache or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles. This is a very brief manual serving as a guide (*a*) to ecclesiastical practices ; (*b*) to Christian conduct, and intended apparently for the instruction of Christian converts. It may have been written in the first or the early part of the second century. It is simple and sincere in tone and was held in high reverence by the early Church. It disappeared completely from the view of scholars until the discovery of a manuscript at Constantinople in 1875. (Cruttwell's *Literary History of Early Christianity*, pp. 57–71, gives a full translation.)

Hermas is the author of a comparatively extensive composition known as "The Shepherd," consisting of Visions, Commandments and Parables. His is an uncultured mind, curiously compounded of moral earnestness and moral feebleness. The work claims to be inspired, and was treated with great respect for several centuries. It was probably composed before the middle of the second century.

Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, according to accepted tradition met his death as a martyr at Rome about the year 110. On his journey to Rome he wrote

a number of epistles of which we possess seven—those to the Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallians, Philadelphians, Smyrnaeans, Romans, and to Polycarp. They are written in a most distinctive style, the language being of an impassioned earnestness, the metaphors especially of a strikingly unexpected kind. Ignatius combines remarkable intellectual vigour with intense zeal for the progress of Christianity.

Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, was a younger contemporary of Ignatius, who attracted the latter's notice as a man after his own heart. A single unimportant epistle survives. It was written to the Philippians, and seems to have been called forth by a scandal due to the malversations of an official of the Philippian Church.

Aristides, a second-century apologist, composed a defence of Christianity, of which a Syriac translation survives, as well as a condensed Greek text inserted into a popular narrative entitled "The History of Barlaam and Josaphat." This Apology is an impressive oration, consisting largely of a polemic against non-Christian religions (tending therefore, to become somewhat wearisome to modern readers) and concluding with a remarkable panegyric of Christian morality.

Justin Martyr (*c.* 100–165 A.D.), an eager student

of philosophy before he became a Christian, endeavoured to render Christian doctrine acceptable to philosophic readers. Two Apologies and the "Dialogue with Trypho" (all three of considerable length) as well as some less well authenticated writings survive. They are written in a frank, clear, attractive style.

Athenagoras composed an "Apology" and a "Treatise on the Resurrection," in the time of Marcus Aurelius. He is a cultured man with a clear, logical turn of mind, who has a respect for philosophy, and endeavours to convince his opponents by sound reasoning.

Tatian, an Assyrian, who passed from Hellenism through Christianity into Gnosticism, is said to have been a pupil of Justin. An "Oration to the Greeks" from his pen survives. He has studied philosophy, and has some of the intellectual restlessness of a truth-seeker. But excess of zeal leads him into a repellent vituperation of everything connected with non-Christian studies.

Theophilus of Antioch wrote a treatise in three books, addressed to Autolycus, dealing especially with the doctrine of the resurrection, the creation, and the evidence for Christianity. The work shows

more erudition than ability. The author died about 180 A.D.

An anonymous EPISTLE TO DIOGNETUS, probably belonging to the earlier part of the second century, survives in a slightly mutilated form. It is mainly a eulogistic description of the Christian life, written in a graceful and dignified style.

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